COPARENTING AND CULTURE

IN THE NEW ZEALAND CONTEXT

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Abstract.

This theoretical consideration of the effect of culture on coparenting in New Zealand, defining coparenting as the manner in which parental partners interact in the parenting of their child, is intended to address the lack of understanding on this subject for populations outside of North America. Culture has been documented to affect parenting, and indeed, coparenting, which in turn, affects child development and adjustment. However, the primary focus on coparenting has been on Caucasian North Americans. Although admittedly this is a large population, and one worthy of study, it is now recognised that the trends reported may not be universally applicable. Of interest here is the way and degree to which culture influences the coparenting team, and therefore, child development. Accordingly, New Zealand coparenting is mapped out with the premise that cultural influences can be drawn upon to develop models of coparenting. These models are then employed to suggest the relevance of coparenting trends of North America on New Zealand populations. It was hypothesised that Māori would be more distinguishable from North American trends, as their cultural values contrasted sharply with each other. Pākehā New Zealanders were considered to lie in between each extreme. Traditional Māori, Urban Māori, and Pākehā cultures were detailed, as were their parenting behaviours and expectations. The coparenting trends that may be supported were also discussed. It was concluded that models of coparenting vary with family structure, as a function of the cultural context to which the parents belong. Differing support structures and familial expectations presented differing coparenting outcomes. As a result it was concluded that Māori coparenting trends may be more in line with Chinese and Native American coparenting investigations, and that Pākehā may be based upon the Caucasian North American trends, although requiring some acknowledgement of the cultural influences related to masculinity, egalitarianism, and conformity and autonomy.

Chapter One

Introduction to Coparenting

Parenting is a challenge like no other, with significant implications for society. It is increasingly well documented that the way in which we parent can play an important role in child development, and ultimately leads to social consequences for us all. However it is increasingly recognised that parenting is not an isolated process, but is instead a cooperative with many influences. In light of this, the study of coparenting has developed in recognition of the importance of familial interactions. Furthermore, as past research has tended towards studying parent and child dyads, the significance of studying coparenting is apparent in the exploration of interactions and influences between parents, and perhaps of more significance, the investigation of parenting as it most naturally occurs. Such a process may provide researchers with more relevant and applicable research findings. However, given the significance of the impact of culture on parenting, the current research cannot be applied to countries outside of North America with much certainty, therefore, this research is concerned with the study of coparenting as it occurs in New Zealand.

Utilising previous definitions, this research shall consider coparenting as the way in which the parental unit divides responsibility between themselves, as well as the amount or extent of responsibility. It is further included in this definition that the values and behaviours of one parent interact with, and influence the other parent, in any direction, between either parent, in either a cooperative or antagonistic manner in the raising of their children (Belsky, Crnic, & Gable, 1995; Russell & Russell, 1994). The intention of this definition is to illustrate the interweaving relationships of the parents with each other and with their children.

This thesis shall attempt to address the issue raised by McHale, Rao, and Krasnow, (2000) who asked, "How useful is the notion of co-parenting in cultures where ideologies, family beliefs, and parenting practices diverge from those of the United States?" (p.112). This question cannot go unanswered when the research is increasingly suggesting that coparenting

impacts on child development in so many ways. The construct of coparenting has a history of application to North American families, predominately of European based culture and of reasonable socio-economic status. While it has also been applied to divorced couples and the consequential ways they proceed with parenting, there is also a need to understand the construct of coparenting as is applies to the family in its most typical context - that is, coparenting between maritally intact parents. The triad of mother, father, and child not only tends to be an ideal normative of family interaction but also provides much more information as to child development by illustrating the full context in which that child is nurtured. Thus, it must be recognised that the study of the whole family is imperative should we wish to understand child development as it is experienced.

Coparenting then, is evident in every maritally intact family. It is the way it is carried out and influenced by such forces as culture that is of interest here, as it is through this that we can come to understand coparenting as it relates to our own countries and experiences, and thus, create a better understanding of the development we generate in our children.

The proposed thesis has two main components. Firstly, it is proposed that North American culture is inextricably interwoven into the reported coparenting trends. Therefore, it is necessary to develop an understanding of what these values are and how they are linked with coparenting behaviours, or the interpretation of them. Secondly, it is considered that the New Zealand psyche, culture and values differ from North American culture and therefore will impact on the construct of coparenting in a different manner. This is important to develop an understanding of, as divergence in coparenting behaviours may lead to divergence in developmental outcomes for the child. It cannot be assumed that New Zealand coparenting and North American coparenting are the same when their cultures are so different. Therefore, different forces may impact on coparenting for New Zealanders and North Americans, and

furthermore, coparenting behaviours may generate or encourage child development outcomes that are very different, all on the basis of culture and societal expectations. Furthermore, New Zealand has two principal cultures, the indigenous Māori people, and the majority Pākehā or New Zealand European. Both of these differ quite markedly in their approach to child rearing as each culture tends to view the world from quite different vantage points. Therefore, the coparenting behaviours of Māori and Pākehā may differ quite remarkably. This being so, the impact of culture on coparenting within the country of New Zealand may provide for variations in child development.

Given the current understanding that North American based research may not generalise well to other cultures, it must be considered as to how well the reported research and trends apply to our own countries and cultures of origin and upbringing. In New Zealand there appears to be a noticeable lack of research on coparenting and yet many aspects of the North American and New Zealand ways of life are incongruent. These cultures must be considered more fully, the relevance of findings made in one culture need to be ascertained as to their relevance to the other culture. Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to investigate whether the North American literature on coparenting can be applied to the New Zealand experience of parenting with reasonable confidence of generalisation, when culture is taken into account.

It is hypothesized here that due to the differences in values and culture, the way coparenting is approached and defined will differ for New Zealanders and North Americans. However, it is recognised that within New Zealand there are different approaches to child rearing and so it is therefore considered that Māori practices will differ the most from the North American trends, while Pākehā practices will be more similar to North America. These different approaches to child rearing may well lead to coparenting behaviours that are

particular to their cultural orientation and expectations. It must be recognised that culture plays a role in development as this impacts on a child's development. Therefore, New Zealand Māori, and New Zealand Pākehā shall be considered as distinct entities.

Research Approach.

To achieve the intended aim, this investigation shall provide a theoretical synthesis of current coparenting research, and of related topics. Specifically, Chapter Two shall provide a backdrop to the following research through the discussion of models of parenting, and the history and significance of coparenting. Chapter Three will focus on the impact of culture both generally and more intimately in the detailing of North American and New Zealand cultures, and the impact of these on coparenting. It is necessary to develop an understanding of values, beliefs and practices and how these are linked with coparenting behaviours, or the interpretation of them. It is considered here that the New Zealand psyche, culture and values differ from North American culture and therefore will impact on the construct of coparenting in a different manner. Chapter Four is concerned with the discussion of current trends and knowledge of New Zealand parenting. In Chapter Five the hypotheses will be fully discussed and related to the research on coparenting, so that predictions for coparenting trends in New Zealand can be developed. Also, the full culmination of the hypothesised New Zealand coparenting behaviour as impacted on by culture will be discussed. Chapter Six is concerned with synthesising the generated research and explaining the contribution of this understanding to the construct of coparenting as it is applied to New Zealand. This chapter will outline the developed conceptual models, bourn of the findings made here, and pertaining to the construct of coparenting in New Zealand. Finally, Chapter Seven contains the full discussion and conclusions of the research.

Chapter Two

Background Understanding of Coparenting

In order that the significance of coparenting can be fully appreciated, it is necessary to outline the parenting literature that has investigated the phenomenon. Therefore, it is intended in this chapter to not only provide a context for coparenting and thereby illustrate the significance of the concept, but also discuss coparenting itself.

Throughout this chapter, the voids in understanding of the process of parenting and the impact of parenting should become apparent. Furthermore, this exploration should also illustrate how the need to study the parenting unit has developed into the study of coparenting. From this research, the current understanding of coparenting will be discussed, highlighting the importance of the construct.

The intention to provide a context for coparenting and the significance of the construct shall be fulfilled through the discussion of firstly, the significance of the family on child development; secondly, the importance of the relationship between the mother and father; and finally, a discussion on what coparenting is and the significance of it.

Significance of the Family.

> "Psychology has been concerned with events within the family but has made little effort to conceptualise and study the family as a unit." (Handel, 1965, p.16).

It has frequently been commented in the parenting literature that there is an obvious lack of family-oriented study. This is surprising in that the family is the natural setting in which child development takes place. This being so, it follows that the study of parenting would be best understood if studied as true to natural form as possible, and involved both parents and the child. It has been commented, however, that this type of inquiry is a

messy one, as summarised by Minuchin (1985) who described the situation as one that created difficulties in following traditional research methods, writing that, "Psychologists value elegant methodology, and triadic or larger units introduce a complexity greater than the sum of their parts." (p.294). However, it is considered here, that it is no longer the case that researchers should continue to ignore the situation; they must be prepared to risk the mess for the expansion and advancement of knowledge.

Further support of the need to study family as a whole has been emphasised by Belsky (1981) who commented, "Since the immediate setting in which most infants are reared is the family, the family must become the central unit of concern for investigations of early human experience." (Belsky, 1981, p.5). Therefore, it is noted here that this research intends to outline typical family functioning and structure as it relates to the situation of Māori and Pākehā in New Zealand.

Impact on Child Development.

Minuchin (1985) stressed the standpoint of family therapists who also insist that there is a need to study the family unit in order to achieve quality work on child development. Minuchin (1985) contended that family therapists associate differences in parental standpoints with negative patterns of behaviour. Similarly, she writes that developmental psychologists consider parental agreement on child rearing values and behaviour to be in harmony with quality parenting outcomes.

In a sample of South Australian families, McFarlane (1987) studied the impact of the trauma of bushfire and subsequent emotional and behaviour problems in the effected child. Findings suggested that overprotective behaviour on the part of the parents towards the child and irritable distress combined, could be considered a major source of psychological

problems for the child. McFarlane (1987) suggested that a high level of parental involvement might encourage the negative effects of family conflict and distress in the child. Although it was also noted that low involvement could also lead to adverse child developmental outcomes should the family interact in antagonistic manners. Furthermore, it was suggested that the child's behaviour and emotional problems were developed and maintained through interaction with their parents.

These results clearly illustrated the impact of the parents on child development. They also, however, support the contention that the child influences the parent back and completes a cycle of interaction that develops and maintains behaviour - whether adaptive or maladaptive. Therefore, it can be seen that parental behaviour does effect the development of the child, and furthermore, it demonstrates the complex set of interactions occurring within the family, which supports the need to study the family and coparenting.

Another Australian study interviewed patients who had attempted suicide. Silove, George and Bhavani-Sankaram (1987) found tendencies for a sub-group of their sample to "...report sequential bonding difficulties in their developmental histories. In this regard, prolonged exposure to an uncaring and controlling parent is a more frequently reported antecedent of adult parasuicidal behaviour than is prolonged or permanent separation from parents in childhood. In addition, over one-third of our parasuicidal patients reported both adverse early parent-child bonding experiences and recent stress in a close relationship..." (Silove et al., 1987, p.225). Again, this research identifies the significant role of family relationships. Furthermore, it also highlights the pervasiveness of these relationships in affecting later life experiences. This research suggests that one parent can be associated with very critical factors of childhood and development, creating a natural progression to the question of the role of the inter-parental interaction process in child development, thus

supporting the study of coparenting. Put another way, if the one parent can have such an influence, it is surely of worth to understand the role of the total parenting unit, as presented to the child.

In explanation of these results, Silove et al., (1987) favoured the notion that the experience of inadequate parental role models as children, may result in the parasuicidal patient experiencing difficulty in discriminating between "...appropriate and inconsistent attachment figures in later life. Additionally, the child who has experienced a conflict-ridden early life might be driven by residual neurotic needs to form attachments to punitive or rejecting partners in adulthood - the so-called 'repetition compulsion'." (p.226). These results illustrate not only the potential impact of parenting behaviour on the child, but also the devastating consequences that may occur after the initial priming relationship of parent and child. Again, these results support the notion of studying families and the processes of parenting in conjunction with the child. To study the family with particular interest in the coparental relationship may provide further insight still.

In further support of the impact of the family on child development, Conger, Conger, Elder Jr., Lorenz, Simons and Whitbeck (1992), studied 205 white middle class families and the impact of economic stress within the family context on adolescent developmental outcomes. Given that economic hardship and family breakdowns have been recorded as associated, as detailed in Conger et al., (1992), the authors constructed a model whereby a high level of economic pressure which is perceived by both parents, effects the mood state of the mother and father, and so negatively impacting on the marital relationship. The authors suggested the depressed mood state of the parents to be a critical factor in leading financial pressure to facilitate marital conflict. Furthermore, both the mood of the parents, as well as their conflictual relationship were theorised to effect parenting, which in turn, would impact

on adolescent adjustment.

Conger et al., (1992) further outlined research that supported the association of depressed affect with irritable and hostile behaviour between partners, impacting negatively on parenting. In their results, Conger et al., (1992) tended to find support for their theory of economic pressure on the family and thus, a negative effect on adolescent adjustment developed through the existence of marital conflict. This negative effect was primarily due to the impact of marital conflict on decreased parental ability. Therefore, the results illustrated the impact of parental interaction - or coparenting, on the developmental outcomes of the child. What is also interesting in this study is that the effects of marital discord are found to be apparent in samples of adolescents. This supports the notion that coparenting has a significant impact on the development of offspring throughout the stages of infant, child and adolescent, thus highlighting the need to study coparenting further.

In relation, Egeland, Kalkoske, Gottesman, and Erickson (1990), studied the degree of continuity of adaptation from preschool to early school years, with their results suggesting that behaviour problems may maintain their existence over these few, early years. Specifically, children who exhibited behaviour difficulties in preschool tended to do so in their early school years also. Likewise, those who were competent in preschool, tended to continue as such at school. Children who remained competent through their preschool and school years differed from those who developed problems at school in levels of family stress and maternal depression. For those who experienced consistent competency, family stress was significantly lower, whereas children who had developed problems at school, had mothers with significantly higher depression scores. As noted in Conger et al., (1992), the impact of parental mood appears to be associated with child development through decreased parenting ability. The authors also noted that the level of family stress was related to

maternal depressive symptomatology and the quality of the home environment - for example level of stimulation, predictability, and organization. It is not hard to entertain the concept that a coparenting relationship, which is antagonistic, may affect the mood of the parent and thus, lead to inadequate parenting. Therefore, this research supports further research on coparenting, and the impact of the family on child development.

The Inclusion of Both Parents in Research.

Belsky (1981) has summarised past findings stating that the inclusion of the father in the study of child development transforms the relationships being studied, so greatly that the conceptualisation of the parent-child relationship must also be transformed. In the same work, Belsky (1981) wrote that past studies "demonstrate that inclusion of the father in the study of infancy and early experience does more than create an additional parent-infant relationship. It transforms the mother-infant dyad into a family system comprised of marital and parent-infant relations." (p. 5). This being so, the inclusion of the father in research ensures a more holistic approach to understanding child development. It also opens the door for the study of coparenting, the relationship of interest here. As the marital relationship and coparenting walk hand in hand, and coparenting has a significant impact on child development, it must follow then, that the father be included in child development study.

On a similar note, Cowan and Cowan (1992) wrote "... to understand more about the children's development we must go beyond observing the relationship between the mother and the child to look at the relationship between the father and the child and at the *combined* influence of both parents and their relationship on the child." (p.6) in support of the study of fathers and mothers together with the child.

McHale and Rasmussen (1998) supported the importance of including fathers in

parenting research by illustrating that accepting fathers into the research equation may shed more light on some parenting associations. They reported that fathers who "...strive to actively promote a strong sense of the family unit and mothers who keep critical and negative remarks about fathers' parenting to a minimum..." (McHale & Rasmussen, 1998, p.52) had 4-year-old children who were perceived by their parents and teachers as relatively free of behavioural problems. Thus, these results lend support for studying fathers and, in turn, coparenting when looking at child development and behaviour outcomes. It can be seen through this research that coparenting is an important facet of parenting behaviour. These results suggest that the behaviour of the father as well as the influence of the mother may have significant implications on child behaviour, and therefore, further research must include both the father and mother in studying parenting and child development.

Furthermore, McHale and Rasmussen (1998) made another significant finding, which can only draw attention to the need to include fathers in the study of child development. McHale and Rasmussen (1998) devised what they consider to be three important family-level constructs. The first was *Hostile-Competitive Coparenting*. The significance of this may be apparent early in the family formation, the marital conflict involved here may lead to externalising symptomatology in the child. The second involves *Discrepancies in Coparental Involvement*, concerning a lack of mutual commitment by the parents to coparenting. This construct leads to internalising symptoms. Thirdly, the construct of *Family Harmony* is concerned with the closeness of the family members. This construct has the potential to enhance well-being and promote adaptive skills for coping with stressors without the need to turn to externalising or internalising symptomatology. The results suggested that "mens' self-reports of behaviour promoting family integrity can be tied to family warmth and mutuality during infancy and also to fewer child aggressive/internalising problems during preschool." (p.53). Thus, it should be noted that fathers who by their own admission, show greater

affection towards their child and wife, as well as actively affirm their family, play an important role in the overall harmony of the family. Because of family harmony, child development is likely to progress in a more favourable manner. To ignore such findings and research families without the inclusion of fathers may well leave the research limited in applicability and inadequate in describing parenting and the effects of this on child development. The results of McHale and Rasmussen (1998) demonstrate the impact of the father in the family, to ignore his role is to cut short the understanding of family behaviour and individual development.

It is noted here that the father is too often ignored in developmental study as part of the whole family, and therefore, this research shall outline typical *family* functioning and structure as it relates to New Zealanders, as well as explore how New Zealanders conform to the American findings of the coparenting construct.

Given that there are many variations on the family, for the purposes of this research, typical family functioning is investigated as this tends to be the norm, and thus, can be applied to a greater proportion of the population. In addition, it is important to develop a solid understanding of a construct as it most commonly and naturally occurs, in order to understand what is 'normal' and extend further research from this conception.

Parenting and Implications of the Marital Relationship.

"The nature of the relationship between parents in a family provides an ongoing influence on a child's development." (Vuchinich, Vuchinich, & Wood, 1993, p.1389).

As discussed in Vuchinich et al., (1993), the relationship held between

mother and father is a significant sub-system of the family system. Obviously, such a notion is hardly surprising, however research in this area remains insufficient, particularly across cultures. For the purposes of this chapter however, the implications of the marital relationship shall be discussed with a view towards developing a context for the construct of coparenting. Obviously, understanding the significance of the marital relationship is fundamental to the concept and implications of coparenting.

In studying the marital relationship, it is appropriate to discuss a model proposed by Belsky (1981), that outlined the relationships that occur within the family. By way of linking family sociology disciplines, Belsky (1981) developed this model as an indication of how the marital relationship, parenting, and infant behaviour and development may all influence each other. This particular approach does not focus so much on individuals, but on the relationships occurring within the family. Such an approach illustrates that parents cannot stand in isolation when parenting, and therefore, it follows that appropriate and adequate research must be carried out to understand the influence of coparenting on child development.

The diagram offered by Belsky (1981) offers a standpoint from which to investigate early childhood and development. This model illustrated that the family and the role of the parents are a highly interrelated system. It can be further understood that when studying coparenting, the marital relationship, infant behaviour and parenting may all have a role to play. The model also indicates the significance of the marital relationship and the possible implications of parental interactions on the child, and therefore lends support to the significance of coparenting. Therefore, Belsky (1981) acknowledges the role of the family, and delves further into the complex set of interactions occurring, which only serves to highlight the need to understand the marital relationship more so.

Further research into the implications of the marital relationship on child development has been conducted by Block, Block, and Morrison, (1981). Their research investigated past findings that had indicated that the quality of the relationship held between parents impacted on the social and emotional development of their child. Block et al., (1981) found that parents who agreed on child rearing created homes that were congenial and productive; who demonstrated consideration of others; and valued intellectual and cultural activities. While negative correlations were found for parental agreement with family discord and conflict, and with a cheerless constricted atmosphere. Furthermore, the 4-year-old sons of parents who agreed on their child's socialisation continued to evidence task oriented, autonomous, and verbally facile behaviour. In addition, impulse control, appropriate affect expression and the ability to admit to negative feelings were also evident. Block et al., (1981), however, found very different results for girls whereby parental agreement was associated negatively with ego or impulse control. Nevertheless, these results support the significant extent of implications of parental agreement and thus the marital relationship.

The significance of the parental relationship is further evidenced in work by Emery (1982). In his review on the effect of marital conflict on children's social behaviour, Emery (1982) acknowledged that " The idea that marital turmoil is the cause of a variety of behavior problems in children is widely held in the public and in the professional domain." (p.310). In order to substantiate the validity of this belief, Emery (1982) reviewed the literature stating that "A number of investigators have found a relation between discord in intact marriages and the severity or frequency of behavior problems in children." (p.311). Furthermore, Emery (1982) cited research that consistently found this to be so in the United States of America, England, and also in India, suggesting some degree of cross-cultural application.

Interestingly, of the work reviewed on intact families, Emery (1982) found that conflictual marital relationships were associated with under controlled behaviour in the child, in each of the studies. However, the results for over controlled behaviour were varied. Therefore, these results point to the negative effect of a poor marital relationship on child development. It is clear that such research provides motivation to understand the coparenting concept further.

Emery (1982) also noted that boys and girls reacted differently to marital conflict and expressed their reactions differently, concluding that it is not a question of whether they are affected, but in what way, and to what degree.

In discussion as to possible mechanisms of the development of child behaviour problems, Emery (1982) suggested three possible hypotheses of a) disruption of attachment bonds, b) modelling of parental behaviour by children, c) altered discipline practices, and d) other models. Of primary interest here is the theory on discipline practices as this research intends to understand coparenting and the cultural impact of it from the perspective of child rearing styles. Emery (1982) explained the possible effects of marital difficulties on discipline by way of change in the application of important discipline techniques, or through the increase of inconsistent discipline practices. Although it does need to be noted that this hypothesis still remains largely untested, Emery (1982) suggested that the impact of the marital relationship on discipline is an important avenue to explore, particularly as discipline is an important part of child rearing, and the small amount of research available points to the significance of inconsistent discipline.

Another standpoint on the implications of the marital relationship on parenting is provided by Deal, Halverson Jr., and Smith Wampler, (1989), who suggested that parental

agreement is a key factor of effective parenting. Furthermore, past research supports the notion that supportive parents who employ inductive control techniques also agree on parental values and behaviour. Therefore, such parents should experience more harmonious coparenting interactions, and thus provide for better parenting and child development outcomes.

In their study of 136 mainly white, middle class families, Deal et al., (1989) found that parental agreement was not significantly correlated with marital satisfaction, but instead found that agreeing families exhibited more positive behaviour, and less issue avoidance than those parents who had low agreement levels. Furthermore, high agreement parents used more positive parenting practices, used less authoritarian control, and agreed with expert viewpoints and other good parents more often, when compared to low agreement parents. Specifically, these mothers were less controlling in child interactions, and the fathers were more task oriented. On the other hand, low agreement parents were described as ineffective, and tended to disagree with other parents and experts. The research undertaken by Deal et al., (1989) illustrated the significance of parental agreement on parenting practices, and thus coparenting behaviour. Furthermore, the practices employed where positive ones, conducive to the development of favourable child development outcomes.

In response to the lack of research studying what components of marital conflict had a negative impact on child development, Grych and Fincham (1990) considered four factors that may negatively associate marital conflict with child development outcomes. Firstly the frequency of marital conflict; second, the intensity of the conflict; third, the content of the conflict; fourth, satisfactory conflict resolution; and fifth, the demographic variables of gender, age, and whether the sample studied is part of a clinic or nonclinic population. Results suggested that marital conflict impacted on childhood difficulties more so than marital

satisfaction. Overall, more frequent and intense conflict was associated with more child behaviour problems, while the converse was true for infrequent, less intense episodes of conflict. In regard to age of vulnerability, children as young as two years-old have shown reactions to exposure to marital conflict, however no one age was distinguishable as a significantly vulnerable period. Furthermore, age may only account for the type of reaction, not so much a long-term effect on behaviour. Both genders were shown to be vulnerable and clinic samples evidenced more behaviour problems. Therefore, the marital relationship is again shown to have significant implications for child development even if these are through indirect methods. As marital interactions are a core part of the coparenting relationship, these results serve importance in the study of coparenting implications.

Grych and Fincham (1990) offered a model for understanding children's responses to marital conflict, drawing on models developed by Cummings and Cummings (1988) and Bradbury and Fincham (1987, 1989). As can be seen in Figure 2.1, this model indicates the significance of parental relationships on the child and thus lends support to the significance of coparenting. Therefore, it must be recognised that the relationships between parents and between the parents and child are important indices of healthy family functioning. This model offers a context for which to understand the many ways the marital relationship can infiltrate the world of the child, remembering that this model is solely concerned with marital conflict.

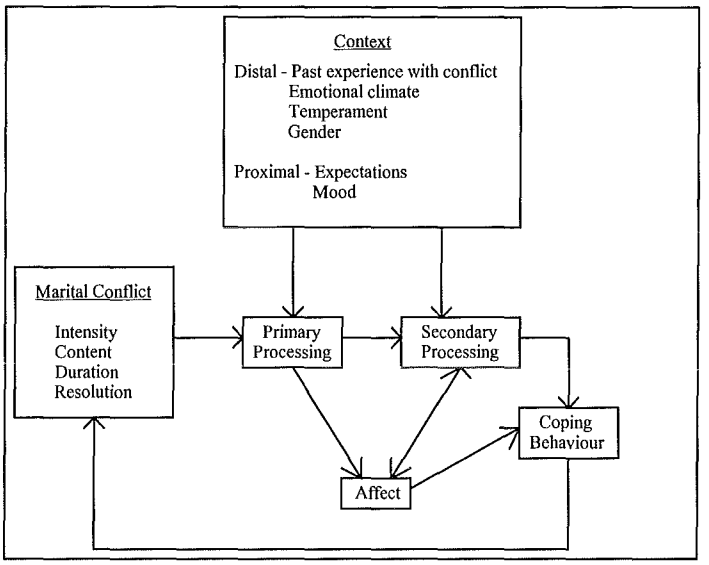

Figure 2.2. A cognitive-contextual framework for understanding children's responses to marital conflict. (Grych & Fincham, 1990).

As can be seen in Figure 2.2, Grych and Fincham (1990) proposed that the psychological aspects of the context may be the most influential components on the child's response to marital conflict. When one considers the further impact of cultural expectations within the context and to the descriptors of the conflict, as well as the processing and resultant coping behaviour, one can see that the effect of coparenting may have very specific outcomes for different populations. This shall be further discussed as a fundamental aspect of this research. For now however, it is enough to understand the significant impact of the parental relationship on child adjustment.

Therefore, it can be seen from the reviewed literature, the marital relationship appears to have implications for child development. In summary, the research highlights the need to study the whole family and the interconnections evolving amongst the parents and children. Parents who agree with each other tend to promote healthy family atmospheres conducive to

positive child development, whereas conflict is typical of ineffective parenting and may lead to inconsistent parenting practices. Furthermore, frequent exposure to intense marital conflict provides a two-headed fiend towards child behaviour outcomes whether the child is male or female. Finally, it appears that the context of the family and the experience of marital conflict are important in determining the fashion in which a child is affected by the coparenting relationship.

Determinants of Parenting Behaviour.

The determinants of parenting behaviour are included here as a background to the determinants of coparenting. While some relevant research on this area has already been discussed, there is further work that is worthy of mention for the contribution it can make to understanding coparenting behaviour.

As well as the models developed by Grych and Fincham (1990) and Belsky (1981) which were discussed earlier, Belsky (1984) has put forward a model on the determinants of parenting which proposed that parenting is shaped by many influences, and these may not be of equal strength at any given time.

This model details the many influences on parenting, these being developmental history, personality, marital relations, work, and social network. From this, the model acknowledges that parenting effects child development. While the developmental component acknowledges the influences of experiences prior to marriage and childbirth, and the social network factor acknowledges societal influence, there is one other component which demands attention, and yet is not included, that of culture. The significance of culture is in the impact it may have on any one of the components already included in the model, but particularly on the marital relationship, parenting behaviour and social networks. Due to the influence of

culture, what is considered favourable child development may vary between ethnicities and groups of people, although there does tend to be a general norm as to what is antisocial behaviour in many western cultures.

In this work, Belsky (1984) wrote that parenting that is sensitive to the child's abilities, capabilities and needs is more likely to encourage favourable emotional, behavioural, intellectual and social child development outcomes. Furthermore, Belsky (1984) also mentioned social support can positively influence parenting. Finally, Belsky (1984) stated "I remain of the opinion that the marital relationship is the first-order support system, with inherent potential for exerting the most positive or negative effect on parental functioning." (p.90). This powerful statement not only supports the notion of parental effects on their children but more importantly, that this is passed on via the marital relationship, which is in essence, the coparenting alliance.

Interestingly, Hoffman and Moon (1999) studied paternal access to children within intact families, finding that the personal characteristics and gender role attitude of the mothers determined the degree to which the mother allowed the father to be involved in the child rearing. Those women who held non-traditional gender role attitudes, expressed a sense of interpersonal trust in their marital relationship, and who had low hostility ratings towards men, where more open to the involvement of the father in the raising of their children. Thus, Hoffman and Moon (1999) found that they could predict a woman's support of the fathers' involvement through three characteristics of interpersonal involvement.

This research outlines the significant role of the mother in determining paternal parenting, which is important to understand when considering the coparenting relationship. If it is indeed the case that mothers are the key-holders to paternal involvement, the coparenting

relationship may be dependent on two factors, one being the personality of the mother, and another being the cultural circumstances which dictate the quantity and type of involvement that the father has in parenting their child. It could be considered that the coparental relationship is also determined largely by characteristics of the mothers' beliefs and interpersonal trust. Once again, these beliefs are constructed upon cultural influences. The interpersonal trust, however, is an issue tied to the personality and personal issues of the mother. Should she feel unable to leave her child in care outside of her own, then coparenting will be a non-existent experience for the father. Such hostile surroundings, as found in previous studies that will be detailed further, are not conducive to quality child-rearing experiences.

The Coparenting Construct.

The literature reviewed here tends to support the role of both parents and has revealed some interesting associations. As outlined, Belsky (1981) has put forth several suggestions for studying parenting and child development; these were primarily concerned with extending the field of study to include the family system, in doing so, understanding child development and parenting behaviour would become more valid and reliable.

Some consistent themes of coparenting appear to be emerging; these include the proposition that coparenting is indeed significant - that the quality of the parental relationship is implicated in child development. It appears that harmonious interactions, positive parental agreement, trends in discipline and the role of stress may play significant roles in understanding coparenting, and may aid the prediction of coparenting.

Coparenting Defined.

Firstly, it is necessary to define the construct of coparenting. The definition that will be utilised here is created from two separate definitions offered by Russell and Russell (1994), and Belsky, Crnic, and Gable (1995).

The interpretation offered by Russell and Russell (1994) clearly illustrated that coparenting involves the effect of both parents on each other, they stated that "It is implied or claimed in the literature that what the father thinks, values, or does as an individual parent is, through various possible processes, coordinated with or influenced by what the other parent thinks, values, or does." (p.757).

The second contribution comes from Belsky, Crnic, and Gable (1995), who applied the construct to divorced families. They defined coparenting as, "...the extent to which ex-spouses function as a cooperative versus antagonistic team in rearing their offspring..." (Belsky, et al., 1995, p.629). As the current research shall be primarily concerned with intact families, the interest in ex-spouses is not relevant here, however, the existence of cooperation and / or antagonism are both pertinent to the study of coparenting in intact families. This is evident in the coparenting definition applied in this investigation. The manner in which parents interact may be antagonistic or supportive, and these behaviours may represent characteristic marital interactions which in turn, influence child development.

Therefore, utilising the outlined definitions, this research shall consider coparenting as the way in which maritally intact parents work in cooperative or antagonistic manners in the parenting of their children. It is further considered in this definition that the values and behaviours of one parent shall interact with and influence the other parent, in any direction, between either parent, in either a cooperative or an antagonistic manner in the raising of their children.

Coparenting Predictors.

Belsky, Crnic and Gable (1995) studied couple similarity and coparenting. Finding that differences in demographics and child rearing attitudes did not account for coparenting behaviours. However, differences in extraversion and interpersonal affect, and on closeness accounted for unsupportive-emotional coparenting events. Differences in anxiety were also associated with less supportive coparenting. Generally speaking, although these results were small in effect, they suggested that the more the coparenting couple differ in personality, the more likely they were to experience an unsupportive coparenting relationship. This association was particularly evident when the partners were experiencing stress. Thus, this study supports the contention that stress may have a negative impact on the coparenting partnership, and that personality difference may influence the success of the coparenting relationship. Considering that coparenting is an important influence on child development, it is worthy to understand that stress and personality factors may develop and maintain less than ideal coparenting conditions, and thus childhood experiences.

The effect of stress on coparenting has also been noted. Belsky, et al., (1995) studied 69 maritally intact Caucasian families. Their results suggested that the cumulative coparenting differences between parents were more evident when the parents were experiencing stress, particularly that of the daily hassles variety. While in low stress situations, spousal differences showed less association with coparenting. Further to the point of stress on coparenting, Minuchin (1974) stated that poverty and discrimination are particularly corrosive to family coping mechanisms. Thus, when considering coparenting in families who belong to an ethnic or cultural minority, and/or who are of a low socio-economic status, it is important to remember that they may well be experiencing more stress than other members of the population of other cultural and economic circumstances, and that this may

effect the status of the coparental relationship and effectiveness. It is noteworthy that Māori in particular (when compared to Pākehā) tend to be over-represented in the low socio-economic status bracket and have experienced historical stresses in the form of colonisation. This is a country vastly affected by the colonisation process. While Pākehā fared well, Māori were severely threatened by the process, Māori were marginalised, their rights and wishes ignored, and they were expected to conform to Pākehā ways and expectations. This made for a turbulent history between the two peoples, and one that Māori have suffered from much more than Pākehā. It is now the case that Māori are consistently over represented in New Zealand prisons, and generally across criminal statistics (Oppenheim, 1975). Māori are highly concentrated in the lower socio-economic status bracket, experience higher unemployment rates than Pākehā and their levels of education are lower than that of Pākehā (Metge, 1995; Ritchie, 1975). Furthermore, health statistics present Māori as suffering more psychiatric illness, hearing impairments, cancers, respiratory and infectious diseases and poor health for women and children, (Metge, 1995; Ramsden, 1997). Meanwhile, Pākehā continue to argue in distain should Māori receive extra assistance, for example, from governmental units. It is not intended here to suggest that Māori display different child rearing practices on the basis of socio-economic status, but instead to suggest that the follow-on effects of the colonisation process as Māori experienced it, has placed their lives in positions more exposed to stress. This is largely due to the differences in culture between Māori and Pākehā, of which Pākehā were intolerant.

The Significance of Coparenting.

Brody, Flor, and Neubaum (1998) summarised the importance of coparenting, stating "The kinds of coparenting relationships that parents form impact children's development and adjustment." (p.227). Along the same lines, Block, Block, and Morrison (1981) had earlier made a similar remark, commenting that "The quality of the parental relationship has been

implicated increasingly over the past 2 decades as a factor contributing to the social and emotional development of the child." (p.965). Similarly, Cowan, Powel, and Cowan (1998) stated that past research supported improving the relationship between parents in order to enhance child development outcomes. These comments recognised that coparenting has significant implications.

In understanding the role of harmony, Brody, et al., (1998) summarized that, "... harmonious interactions among adults who share childrearing responsibilities are associated with parenting practices that enhance children's development." (p. 239-240). This is an important statement in predicting coparenting behaviour and outcomes. The significance of these findings are supported by Rutter (1990) who noted that secure and harmonious or supportive love or personal relationships is one of two experience categories which can further protect those who may be vulnerable to developing psychiatric difficulties. Similarly, Pianta, Egeland, and Sroufe (1990) also stated that the measure of maternal stress in interpersonal relationships that was employed, was a potentially important predictor of socioemotional/behavioural outcomes, in addition it was also found to be predictive of ratings cognitive competence in girls by their classroom teachers." (Pianta et al., 1990)

Furthermore, the results of Brody et al., (1998) acknowledge the work of all involved in parenting, not just the husband and wife that are the traditional coparenting unit of most Western, European-based cultures. Instead, family groups that occur in Māori families are finally receiving acknowledgement also. Māori employ parenting strategies foreign to many typical Western European approaches, these differing cultures provide for differing upbringings, and ultimately, differing outcomes. Therefore, coparenting will also differ. It is important that this is researched and understood in order that both Pākehā and Māori child rearing behaviours, and child development outcomes can be understood. Such an

understanding may provide support resources for families in need. A reference as to Pākehā and Māori expectations in New Zealand may aid future family-oriented interventions.

Recent work by McHale and Rasmussen (1998) highlighted not only the role of harmony but also the social implications and significance of coparenting. As detailed earlier, McHale and Rasmussen (1998) devised what they consider to be three important family-level constructs, these being Hostile-Competitive Coparenting, Discrepancies in Coparental Involvement, and Family Harmony. Utilising this categorisation, McHale (1995) found that overt marital conflict was positively associated with hostile-competitive coparenting behaviour, while nonegalitarian power in the relationship was positively associated with differences in coparenting involvement. Therefore, this research implicated the marital relationship in coparenting behaviour, and offers a predictor for coparenting involvement. From other research, it would be expected that the children of these parents would be more likely to develop adjustment problems. It is important therefore to study coparenting further and understand what may be related to different populations, as the study of coparenting can make a profound impact on the study of parenting and subsequent child development.

Following on from this, in their study of 37 American families, McHale and Rasmussen (1998) found that high levels of hostile-competitive coparenting and low levels of family harmony were associated with higher ratings of hostile-aggressive behaviour by the child's teacher three years later. The results suggested that from as early as the preschool years, coparenting behaviour is already associated with child behaviour outcomes. This illustrates the importance of an understanding of the construct of coparenting, how it occurs within a culture, and how it impacts on the development of children.

Closely related to family harmony, Deal, Halverson, Jr., and Smith Wampler (1989)

have provided detail on positive parenting and agreement, adding to the profile of effective coparenting. Their findings have suggested that spouses who exhibit high levels of positive behaviour and lower levels of issue avoidance have high agreement families. Furthermore, high agreement parents employed more positive parenting, were less authoritarian, and tended to conform more to expert thinking while also agreeing more with other good parents. However, the authors pointed to an issue which this thesis shall attempt to address, they noted that a broader range of cultures, ethnicities and social classes require further study. As the research currently stands, Deal, et al., (1989) observed that their results may have altered with context. Therefore, in order to understand the full significance of these findings other cultures must be studied also. This is true for much of the research in child development, and is exactly why this thesis has been formulated. The study of coparenting has focused on North American samples, with a vastly different approach to life when compared to New Zealand samples. Thus, this thesis shall attempt to understand the cultural variations of Māori and Pākehā and associate the coparenting trends accordingly. This should present a basic yet significant conceptualisation of coparenting in New Zealand and provide for a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of coparenting on child development.

Work by Brody, Stoneman, Smith, and Gibson (1999), studied coparenting and sibling relationships in African American samples. There results found associations that linked parents' psychological resources with the quality of family relationships, whereby the more depressive symptoms in the parents were associated with more conflict, and less support within the family. Furthermore, family relationships and parenting practices were associated with self regulation in the child whereby families characterised by caregiver conflict, low coparenting support, and less closeness between children and their caregivers, tended to have children that parents rated as having low self-regulation. Conversely, the results suggested that fewer problems of self-regulation in the child were associated with supportive parenting

practices. While ultimately an indirect association was found for coparenting and sibling relationships, this research outlined the effects of parental interactions on parenting practices, once again highlighting the significance of coparenting constructs.

Among the latest research is work by Kitzmann (2000) who studied parents and their sons interacting after conditions involving pleasant and conflictual discussions. The results suggested that negative parental interactions were associated with lower family cohesion, less support/engagement by both parents towards their son, more family negativity, lower family warmth, and less democratic parenting (Kitzmann, 2000). Furthermore, there were no instances found where the marital negativity was associated with more positive parenting. These results again highlight the significant effect of the parental relationship on the functioning of the family and point to possible effects on the child.

Also recently undertaken was work by McHale, Rao, and Krasnow, (2000) who reported links between child conduct problems and Coparental Reprimand activities in their study of Chinese families. Coparental Reprimand activities involved the discipline of the child in three manners. Firstly, by a parent; secondly, through asking the other parent to discipline the child; and third in "Taking a back seat in discipline" (McHale, et al., 2000, p.115). The results suggested that the way in which a coparental unit disciplined their child may have an impact on the development of conduct problems such as aggression and hyperactivity. Again, this points to the significance of studying the construct of coparenting. Such research is clearly stating that coparenting can and does have substantial effects on the development of children. Therefore, this must be acknowledged and appropriately applied to the coparenting units in their specific cultural contexts.

Conclusion.

In conclusion, this chapter has presented the results of many studies concerned with the impact of the father, and the family on child development. Furthermore, the coparenting relationship has been discussed as a viable and progressive option for studying the impact of parenting on child development.

General coparenting findings that have come to light suggest that differences in parental personalities may account for a more unsupportive coparenting relationship, particularly when experiencing stress. Stress may be implicated in its own right as it has also been noted that cumulative coparenting differences between parents were more evident when the parents were experiencing stress. Similarly, parents' psychological resources were shown to be associated with the quality of family relationships, whereby parental depressive symptoms were associated conflict, and less support within the family. Furthermore, the quality of the parental relationship itself appears to be associated with social and emotional development in children. More specifically, harmonious interactions between coparents are associated with parenting practices that enhance child development. However, discrepancies in coparental involvement, and hostile-competitive behaviour appear to influence child development in the opposite direction, whereby conflict was positively associated with hostile-competitive coparenting behaviour, and in turn, high levels of hostile-competitive coparenting and low levels of family harmony have been associated with higher ratings of hostile-aggressive behaviour in the child. In addition, nonegalitarian power has been positively associated with differences in coparenting involvement. Also, negative parental interactions have been associated with lower family cohesion, less support/engagement by both parents, more family negativity, lower family warmth, and less democratic parenting.

Finally, the way in which coparents discipline their child may impact on the development of conduct problems such as aggression and hyperactivity.

Through each of these areas, the significance of studying coparenting becomes even more evident, providing a context from which to understand coparenting and the influence it may have on child adjustment. In addition, the research outlined also suggested that the areas of development that can be influenced by the coparenting relationship may extend across the social, emotional and behavioural arenas. Therefore, it would be foolish to ignore the significant findings of these past investigations, and so coparenting must be considered further. However, it must also be considered that if coparenting is such an important concept, then it must be studied across different populations, so that the applicability of coparenting behaviours can be tailored to develop quality investigations for a diverse range of populations.

Chapter Three

Culture and Coparenting

As was outlined in Chapter 2, coparenting is founded upon research findings that have implicated the marital relationship with parenting, and therefore with child development outcomes. It was also mentioned that culture had a role to play but had been left out of much of the research, yet culture has a significant part to play in many aspects of life and development. Perhaps it is the case that researchers are so familiar with their own values and beliefs, that they are unable to consider any other way. However, parenting practices do vary with culture, and therefore it cannot be presumed that coparenting is immune from the effects of families and society.

In acknowledgement of the effect of culture, this chapter considers culture as the focus, and it is intended that culture shall remain a fundamental part of the remaining research. This discussion of culture in particular, is intended to establish the importance of culture, due to the influence it has on parenting and child development. Therefore, as culture has an impact on parenting, it follows then that culture also influences coparenting.

In order to understand the general direction of this chapter, it is necessary to understand the premise behind it. It is hypothesised here that through the understanding of culture and parenting behaviour, it will become clear as to whether the current coparenting research in North America is applicable to New Zealand samples. In order to achieve the aim of establishing a place for culture alongside coparenting, this chapter shall firstly consider the research on general culture findings, that supports the study of culture in child development research. Secondly, North American culture will be discussed as much of the coparenting literature has been based on North American samples. Thirdly, New Zealand culture will be further discussed as it relates to parenting, as this is the population of interest in this investigation.

Coparenting Across the Cultures.

"How useful is the notion of co-parenting in cultures where ideologies, family beliefs, and parenting practices diverge from those of the United States?" (McHale, Rao, and Krasnow, 2000, p.112).

The Significance of Culture.

So far, in the models and literature discussed, there has been little mention of the impact of culture. This must be accounted for, however, as the very basis of coparenting may be culture dependent, such a conceptualisation has been supported by Chao (1994) who stated "Ultimately, researchers must be able to appreciate and be aware of how the larger theoretical frameworks or disciplines that they adhere to are also influenced by culture." (p.1118). It follows that the decisions parents make, they way the relate to their spouse, the expectations they have of their spouse, and even who is included in the coparental team, are all culture dependent. These are all beliefs that are passed on through families, however unconsciously, that impact on parenting. However, although it can be seen that culture must play a role, the current research is saturated with North American findings.

Culture can be considered as the "...differences between societies in such matters as the tools and other artefacts made, their knowledge of and beliefs about nature, their cosmology, customs, values, laws and so on." (Hinde, 1987, p. ii). Hinde (1987) also described culture as a "...convenient label for many of the diverse ways in which human practices and belief *differ between groups*." (p.3-4). For example, the much studied North American European culture tends to focus on notions of individualism, independence, freedom, individual choice, self expression, separateness, and uniqueness (Chao, 1994), whereas these notions are in severe contrast to traditional Māori cultural values of collectivism. When this is considered, it becomes clear that these are two very different

approaches to life, which must impact on daily living, perceptions and practices. The statement made by McHale et al., (2000) at the beginning of this section, questioned the notion of coparenting in cultures other than those within the United States of America. This highlighted the importance of cultural relevance, and furthermore, acknowledged the fact of cultural diversity. They raised an important point, namely that coparenting must be explored outside of the United States, and that also, it cannot be assumed that the findings there are relevant elsewhere, due to the impact of culture on coparenting behaviour. Similarly, Miller and Goodnow (1995) discussed how culture provides an indices of what is natural, mature, moral, and what is aesthetically pleasing. Furthermore, they stated that "...human development occurs in cultural contexts..." (p.7). Therefore indicating that culture is an important influence on child rearing, warranting further investigation in the research of the future.

Culture appears to play a much more important role than simply passing on the acquired knowledge and practices of generations before. It appears that it may also impact on healthy psychological development. Sameroff and Seifer (1990) noted that children who experienced "continuous family and cultural disruption became increasingly unable to develop in a healthy, competent direction and become more vulnerable to developing severe psychopathology." (p.61). Therefore, culture not only impacts on many aspects of development but also has the potential for profound effects on psychological wellbeing.

Robert Le Vine (1977) discussed the need to make allowances for cultural differences in terms of local customs, history and contextual conditions when applying psychological constructs, noting that they may be irrelevant for different people and practices.

Chao (1994) studied coparenting with a Chinese sample in response to the lack of

coparenting research outside the United States, suggesting that western notions of such parenting styles as authoritarian may occur for different reasons, and the favoured Chinese practices may differ from the North American expectations. Based upon this reasoning, Chao (1994) wrote that the parenting styles devised by Baumrind in 1971 may be inappropriate for other cultures. Therefore, their application should be made with cultural deviations kept in mind.

As Chao (1994) redefined parenting practices in China on the basis that the collective Chinese culture contrasts sharply to the North American individualistic flavour, so too will Māori parenting need to be addressed. As traditional Māori society is built upon collective foundations, and Pākehā society on individualism, there are many areas of incompatibility. Chao (1994) further noted that the study of parenting in cultures outside of North America required a conceptualisation of an indigenous model of behaviour, rather than reworking existing models that may contain inappropriate and inapplicable concepts or definitions.

As will be illustrated, the New Zealand identity is a strong indicator of 'appropriate' behaviour in this country. It will be discussed how the indigenous Māori people and the dominant Pākehā, as the two people of the land, differ markedly in family structure and child rearing ideals. However, these two cultures of New Zealand may still be more alike than they are different when compared to the North American research.

North American Culture.

As mentioned earlier, Chao (1994) expressed concern that "The developmental psychology framework is part of a North American "psychology" or culture that has been

immensely preoccupied with "individualism" and "independence," stressing freedom, individual choice and self-expression, separateness, and uniqueness." (p.1118). This statement offers a concise viewpoint on North American European culture, whereby the success and development of the individual is highly valued.

Fellows (1972) described the American melting pot whereby "...immigrants from other countries and Americans in minority racial or ethnic groups lose their unique self-identity, their culture and their heritage, and become submerged by the overpowering dominance of ....the 'American way of life'." (p. V).

In a similar vein, Ingoldsby and Smith (1995) wrote that American residents are often accused of being ignorant and insensitive to other cultures, furthermore they pointed to an American tendency to be consumed with ones' own culture and believe this to be the reigning and supreme way of life. As this work suggests, there is typically little research conducted outside of the United States of America on coparenting, and furthermore, there is a strong tendency to study Caucasian American samples over the Native or African American people. The acknowledgement of culture in the current work prescribes that the two ethnicities just mentioned should be explored individually and as significant in their own right. Furthermore, their cultural distinctiveness questions the applicability of past Caucasian-based coparenting research.

Developed using American ideals, the work undertaken by Baumrind (1968) defined child and parent relationships in the form of attachment. The three attachment categories have remained popular in describing the relationship between the mother and child particularly, and have also been applied as predictors for child developmental outcomes. However, although these may be popular and widely utilised in current Western research,

there have been suggestions made that even the most widely accepted theories, may still be confined to particular cultures, as evidenced in Chao (1994). Although, for the purpose of understanding North American parenting, the categories of attachment are included here. This will be followed by an account of Native American and African American coparenting research, which will lead on to New Zealand parenting and the culture that impacts upon the family.

Attachment and Parental Control.

The concept of attachment is included here as it is central to so much of the parenting and child development research available. Furthermore, it utilises North American ideals and therefore, projects an image of what is considered healthy parental behaviour for this particular culture.

Baumrind (1968) defined the three parenting modes of Authoritarian, Authoritative, and Permissive in terms of an individualistic society. The Permissive parent was described as one who "attempts to behave in a non punitive, acceptant, and affirmative manner toward the child's impulse, desires, and actions. She [the parent] consults him about policy decisions and gives explanations for family rules. She makes few demands for household responsibility and orderly behavior.....She allows the child to regulate his own activities as much as possible, avoids the exercise of control, and does not encourage him to obey externally defined standards." (p.256). However, the Authoritarian parent was said to "...shape, control, and evaluate the behavior and attitudes of the child in accordance with a set standard of conduct.....She [the parent] does not encourage verbal give and take..." (p.261). Lastly, the more idealised Authoritative parent was said to "...direct the child's activities but in a rational, issue-oriented manner. She [the parent] encourage [sic] verbal give and take, and shares with the child the reasoning behind her policy. She values both expressive and

instrumental attributes, both autonomous self-will and disciplined conformity..." (p.261). These parenting styles were considered to impact on the attachment relationship between child and parent, and thus on the development of the child.

The many reported correlations between attachment and different aspects of child development are not of concern here, however, this conceptualisation is a useful way of understanding parenting. Vaughn, Egeland, Sroufe and Waters (1979) reported results suggesting that the experience of stressful events could distinguish those infants who were anxiously attached, from those who were securely attached. Furthermore, those infants who were secure at 12 months and then classified as anxious at 18 months, were characterised by the experience of a stressful event. It could be considered that the secure attachment relationship was developed through an Authoritative parenting style, as opposed to the Permissive or Authoritarian methods, therefore indicating that sensitive parenting may foster positive child-parent relations. Although there is little information provided on the sample demographics, it is significant to note that this study supported the notion that stress can effect parenting, and this effect on parenting can therefore effect the attachment relationship.

It is considered here then, that supportive coparenting may be paired with the Authoritative parenting style, at least in Caucasian American populations. This conclusion is reached through the understanding that supportive coparenting requires each individual to be attuned to the needs of the child and the other parent, as well as being able to respond in an appropriate manner toward both. The successful coparenting relationship is one that encourages many of the attributes of the Authoritative parent as described by Baumrind (1968), and is distinguished from the Permissive parent through the utilisation of boundary setting. It is therefore suggested here that the coparenting relationship that is successful, is such, because it is founded upon sound parenting principles. However, it must be noted, that

the current study is primarily concerned with the impact of culture, and therefore, it must be understood that these notions are very much constructed in an individualistic, European-based experience of parenting and child rearing, and therefore may need to be adapted to other cultures. It shall be further discussed just how coparenting is constructed across New Zealand and North America, and how it may be that successful coparenting is partner to Authoritative parenting principles.

Native Americans.

There is very little information available on Native American parenting behaviour. Most of the reviewed research was concerned with Caucasian samples, sometimes featuring a minority sample of African Americans, however, Native Americans were rarely discussed. They are included here as they are perhaps the most similar of the North American people to Māori in terms of history and cultural identity, and therefore are considered here. However as the research is very sparse, there is little opportunity to project Native American coparenting trends onto a Māori coparenting hypothesis.

There is also similarity in their experiences of colonisation, as both ethnicities were severely effected by the arrival of foreign diseases and warfare of some description, (Belich, 2001; Joe, & Malach, 1998; McHale, 1997b; Metge, 1995; Walker, 1990). Joe & Malach (1998) described the urbanisation of Native Americans, stating "These young people were often relocated into the urban ghettos where they were purposely settled so that they would not be living near another Indian. Although the relocation worked for some, many found themselves isolated and ill-prepared to deal with the cultural shock of the impersonal urban lifestyles...." (p.132). Māori underwent a comparable experienced termed 'pepper-potting' whereby Māori were encouraged to move in to urban areas but in a manner that separated them from their culture and support structures. (Durie, 1998).

In terms of religion, Māori and Native Americans share related conceptualisations. As discussed in Joe & Malach (1998), traditional Native American spirituality encompasses all living things. Furthermore, all things whether natural or supernatural, are interconnected due to their having life. Interestingly, for Māori many parallels can be drawn, Durie (1998) detailed the Māori worldview whereby the environment is considered to be an "...interacting network of related elements, each having a relationship to the others and to earlier common origins." (p.21). As overseers of the environment and all that dwells amongst it, atua or god-like identities were described by Durie (1998), who noted that the number of atua which exist may differ amongst iwi. Basically however, he described the atua of Tangaroa (seas, waters, fisheries), Rongomatāne (kūmara and crops), Haumiatiketike (fern roots and the bush undergrowth), Tāne Mahuta (forests - trees and birds), Tāwhirimātea (the elements), and Tūmatauenga (humankind).

Joe & Malach (1998) also detailed a traditional model of ideal existence, in that the four elements of physical, mental, emotional and spiritual being must exist in harmony in order for the person to experience balance, harmony, and health. Almost identically, McCarthy (1997) discussed Duries' (1986; 1994) whare tapa-whā (4-sided house) model of Māori wellbeing. The aspects included te taha whānau (family component), te taha wairua (spiritual), te taha tinana (physical), and finally, te taha hinengaro (mental). McCarthy stated that to be healthy, these components needed to be cared for, nurtured, and balanced. Another aspect of this can be seen in the governmental document *Te Whāriki* (1993) which provides educative centres in New Zealand with a working framework of appropriate developmental facilitation. As described in Royal Tangaere (1997), the elements highlighted here include tinana, hinengaro, whatumanawa (development which portrays emotions) and wairua. Again it is mentioned by Royal Tangaere that these need to be developed in harmony with each

other in a balanced fashion. As can be seen, these are very similar approaches to health and wellbeing, therefore contributing to the aligning of the cultures of Māori and Native American.

Attempts at assimilation were made through various means, with both Māori and Native Americans banned from experiencing and utilising their culture and language in schools, while Europeans norms and ideals were promoted (Bell, 1996; Irwin & Davies, 1994; Joe & Malach, 1998; McCarthy, 1997; Walker, 1990). Furthermore, Joe & Malach (1998) discussed that "...although many Native American families are integrated into mainstream society, many still maintain their traditional beliefs and customs to varying degrees." (p.135). This being akin to the Māori situation whereby adapting to mainstream Pākehā ways is almost essential should one wish to be economically and socially stable (Jones, 1990; Steven, 1990). Many Māori also experience the antagonistic relationship of their ethnic culture with their adopted culture (Davey, 1990; Durie, 1997a; Durie, 1997b; Durie, 1998; Gold & Webster, 1990; McCarthy, 1997).

Further evidence of the likeness between Māori and Native Americans can be illustrated in the comparison of values in Joe & Malach (1998) whereby Native Americans were said to value harmony with nature, cooperation, submissiveness, anonymity, sharing of wealth, are oriented around the present and are flexible with time. Conversely, 'Non-Indians' were described as valuing mastery over nature, competition, aggression, individuality, work to 'get ahead', save for the future, are future time oriented, and are inflexible with time. These are similar standpoints for both Māori and Pākehā also.

In further support of Chao (1994), Joe & Malach (1998) detailed how traditional Native American approaches were based upon an adult-centred environment, whereby self-

care by children was actively promoted. Similarly, Māori children were encouraged to look after their own selves (Metge, 1995; Ritchie & Ritchie, 1970).

Similarly, both cultures utilise extended family members in the parenting of the child to a greater degree than traditional Caucasian North Americans. (Brody, Stoneman, Flor, McCrary, Hastings, & Conyers, 1994; Metge, 1995; Smith, 1998), and therefore highlight the need to reconceptualize the understanding of the coparenting relationship in Māori families. Joe and Malach (1998) discussed that "In many instances, the grandparents are responsible for the children. Aunts and uncles are also likely to be involved, especially if the family resides on the reservation and not in an urban area." and that "...young American Indian families who relocate to the cities in search of jobs often leave behind their much-needed family and extended family support networks." (p. 144). So similarly, both Pihama (1996) and Durie (1998) detailed how traditional Māori families divided parenting roles amongst the generations, and suffered at the hands of pepper-potting ideals.

However, due to the lack of study, the current European-based work is the coparenting resource that is to be utilised when studying Māori and Pākehā coparenting. It is therefore considered here that there is very little evidence that coparenting as it has been currently studied is applicable to traditional Māori parenting in New Zealand. As a result, Māori parenting needs to be further discussed.

One interesting study conducted outside of North America was that of McHale, Rao and Krasnow (2000), who studied a Chinese sample. Their research significantly detailed the differences between North American and Chinese culture and their conceptualisations of parenting and appropriate child development. As the Chinese tend towards a more collective-oriented society, the work of McHale et al., (2000) may prove to be the most appropriate and

constructive study available for studying Māori coparenting samples.

African-American

The study of African American coparenting behaviour, while more readily accessible than the research on Native Americans, remains to be poorly studied in comparison to Caucasian based studies. However, the African American shares some similarities with the Māori of New Zealand, for example, the tendency to be highly concentrated in low socio-economic brackets, and to have migrated to urban centres from rural areas. (for African Americans: Brody, Stoneman, Flor, McCrary, Hastings, & Conyers, 1994; Fellows, 1972; For Māori: Durie, 1997a; Durie, 1997b, Durie, 1998; Metge, 1995; Ritchie & Ritchie, 1970).

Willis, (1998) outlined some traditional child rearing beliefs of African Americans, stating that children require adult protection and assurance of love. Furthermore, discipline is overseen as a community. Willis (1998) described that "Although less true than in the past, the African American community still maintains a belief that all responsible adults are expected to act in *loco parentis* for the children of the community." (p. 189), as is similarly the case for traditional Māori establishments (Metge, 1995). Many African American adults value education, food and play, as well as conformity to rules and expectations, to try hard in school, and to treat others with respect. Knowledge of ones' family and background are also typically considered important in the rearing of children. However, there is little coparenting research again on the minority of African Americans, thus making consistent inferences difficult. Therefore, it can be seen that the study of Māori coparenting must be individually studied and understood.

In a study conducted by Brody, Stoneman, Flor, McCrary, Hastings, and Conyers, (1994), the sample of African-American samples produced some interesting and relevant

correlations. The authors reported that less financial resources were related to higher rates of reported depression and lower optimism in the parents. Furthermore the quality of the marital interaction, as well as co-caregiver conflict and co-caregiver support were related to reported levels of depression and optimism. For fathers, the support received from their spouse, the quality of marital interactions, and conflict between the caregivers was related to their optimism. However, the levels of optimism for mothers were related only to spousal support and caregiver conflict, whereby conflict was related to poor quality of marital interactions and less co-caregiver support. These results suggest that the support and conflict in this sample of African-American relationships may account for parental depression and optimism, which may in turn effect the quality of the coparenting alliance. In addition, Brody et al., (1994) reported a negative association between financial resources and parental depression, and a positive relationship with parental optimism. It follows from these findings that African-American based populations may tend to experience greater coparenting antagonism in situations of financial difficulty and thus parenting depression. However, they may also share a coparenting co-operative in situations of greater financial relief and optimism. This suggests that financial experiences have a significant impact in the life of the African-American family, and is worth considering, as both Māori and African-Americans are highly concentrated in lower socio-economic brackets of their respective societies (Durie, 1997a; Durie 1997b; Durie, 1998; Metge, 1995; Ritchie & Ritchie, 1970).

Brody et al., (1994) concluded their study with the significant finding that "Parents' co-caregiver support was directly linked with youth self-regulation in both the maternal and paternal models." (p. 603). Although it was noted that this may be due to child effects, it is still notable that a supportive coparenting alliance is associated with positive child development. These results are significant in their suggestion that supportive coparenting can have important implications for successful child rearing.

Summary.

It can be seen that the effect of culture is prominent among differing societies in parenting practices and in values that relate to child rearing. While it may appear that the New Zealand Māori and the Native American peoples share similarities in cultural approaches and historical experiences, there remains to be too little research carried out using Native American- based populations to accord accurate trend mapping across cultures. Indeed, it appears, that due to the position of being a minority in terms of population, and thus cultural awareness, it is difficult to hypothesise Māori coparenting behaviour through the knowledge acquired on other minority populations. On the other hand, the plentiful research on Caucasian Americans, provides resourceful indicators of expected coparenting predictors and trends, which may prove useful in understanding New Zealand Pākehā coparenting practices.

The fact remains however, that culture is the underlying cause of difference in parenting, and thus coparenting, behaviours and expectations. Yet, there is insufficient research to reconcile coparenting trends across cultures. Instead, it is clear that research based upon Chinese samples may provide the most useful clues into understanding Māori coparenting behaviour. Once again, is important to note that the reason Caucasian American research is an inappropriate indicator of expected behaviour in Māori parents, is founded on the notion that culture interweaves inextricably with cognitions, the values, and the actions behind rearing children. Therefore, this study intends to investigate New Zealand, and apply coparenting principles to the Māori and Pākehā who dwell in this country.

New Zealand Culture.

The New Zealand Psyche.

It is considered in this research that the New Zealand psyche is the culmination of societal values and beliefs, and that these impact on how children are raised in New Zealand. As a small country in terms of population, with a history entwined with conflict and impacted on by isolation, New Zealand has developed a culture of its own which must be taken into account when researching. Given that "human development occurs in cultural contexts..." (Miller and Goodnow, 1995, p.7), five predominate aspects of the New Zealand psyche are included here and can be considered as core aspects or influences on New Zealand culture in general. Many behaviours and attitudes of New Zealanders can be traced back to these aspects and thus, many parenting behaviours can be explained by these experiences and beliefs. The five aspects of colonisation, frontier mentality, egalitarianism, masculinity, and the tug of conformity and autonomy, are the basics of what makes New Zealanders unique, and what motivates them to behave in the ways they do. As will be discussed, coparenting does not escape these influences but is also impacted upon. For this reason it is proposed that New Zealand coparenting will differ from North American coparenting. These five aspects are very much specific to New Zealand and therefore make New Zealanders distinct from North Americans. These have been selected for study for several reasons, however they have all had a part to play in New Zealand's short history. As parenting behaviour, and therefore, coparenting behaviour is formed through culture and societal expectations, it will be seen that each of these aspects impact on coparenting.

Colonisation.

Colonisation is included here for two reasons. The main being the impact on Māori parenting, however, it has also set the stage for Māori and Pākehā relationships. Before and during the urban migration of Māori following World War II, Māori for several reasons, were alienated from their land and social support structures. Traditionally, child rearing was the

responsibility of all adults of the whānau, however this coparenting alliance in an extreme form could no longer exist once Māori moved to the cities. Government policy of "pepper potting" (Durie, 1998, p.55) ensured that Māori were well distributed across urban areas so as to encourage assimilation (Durie, 1998), and such a process immediately disrupted traditional child rearing practices. Resulting coparenting behaviours have seen the separation of Māori into two main groups - those that have managed to retain traditional child rearing practices and who continue to acknowledge their whakapapa (genealogy) and Māori identity. Another group of Māori no longer identify or have knowledge of their Māori heritage - for a range of reasons, however the general process of colonisation alienated many of these people from their land and culture. Moreover, Māori have been marginalized and degraded, thus attacking the foundations of their being. Given that culture develops a sense of belonging (Miller and Goodnow, 1995) and this is conducive to positive developmental outcomes, the experience of dissention and to be taunted on the basis of culture and identity Māori has taken a toll on many Māori who can no longer be proud of who they are, there are countless flow-on effects of the resulting low self-esteem. Because being Māori was not appropriate in many urban settings, and for a long time, not supported by the New Zealand Government, many Māori have become alienated from their culture, often with traumatic results.

In summary, colonisation has impacted on the structure of coparenting for Māori so that Māori operate generally in two parenting styles. It has also encouraged feelings of inferiority between Māori and Pākehā. As Māori did not easily assimilate, their culture was either ignored or frowned upon. Either way, this transformed Māori coparenting into a smaller unit, one that was based on the immediate family. Furthermore, changes to the whānau exacerbated the stress whānau experienced, resulting in dysfunctional and broken whānau, although others did triumph (Metge, 1995). However, for those parents who continued to rely on their own childhood experiences, whether consciously or unconsciously,

the rearing of their own children may have consisted of practices not well adapted to an environment seriously lacking in wide whānau support (Metge, 1995). What this means for coparenting is that as a result of colonisation, Māori may coparent on the basis of traditional child rearing practices without the traditional context of support networks to assure parenting success, and therefore development may be compromised. However, parents may consciously adapt their practices to appropriately rear their child according to their context and achieve success. Finally, it may be that some Māori can continue to coparent in the more traditional form with adequate whānau support to lead to positive and holistic child development.

As mentioned earlier, colonisation has also impacted upon Māori and Pākehā relationships. The evidence of this not only lies in the degradation outlined, but also in parenting practices. Jane and James Ritchie in their studies of New Zealand parenting have noted that "...the group under the greatest social pressure to conform- the Māori families in the small rural town - were most severe in their use of punishment." (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1981, p.10). The pressure to conform has arisen through the colonisation process, and is created by Pākehā onlookers. Furthermore, Ritchie and Ritchie found that "...Māori and Island families often feel that they are being watched and judged by the Pākehās around them. This surveillance increased their rigidity, their harshness towards their children and their punitiveness." (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1981, p.64). This indicates that parenting has been impacted on by Māori and Pākehā relationships, and for the worse. It is important when studying New Zealand culture and parenting practices that it is recognised that Māori have experienced the pressures of colonisation, and their culture and parenting practices have adjusted accordingly. Therefore, the coparenting behaviours now exhibited are based upon cultural notions that are still affected by colonisation.

Frontier Mentality.

Modern day New Zealand was founded by Europeans who took pride in being self sufficient, and despite the isolation and lack of resources, would work hard and make something of themselves. From this pioneering spirit, New Zealanders of today have come to believe that everyone has the same opportunities presented to them in this land of plenty. However, New Zealand society is concentrated around Pākehā norms, culture, values and beliefs, this entails that if one does not conform, one will not survive. In the case of Māori, some over time, have been able to conform and succeed in the Pākehā way. However, for many Māori who cling to their heritage, the culture they experience in their homes is too strong to be able to relate and conform to Pākehā ways.

The catch phrase of 'Kiwi ingenuity' is a favourite amongst New Zealanders. It epitomises the natural ability of ancestors, and of today's individuals to overcome obstacles in innovative, adaptable ways. As Kuo and Richardson (1997) outlined, Kiwi ingenuity is a strong part of the national identity. The term came about as a result of the geographical isolation of the country, there was often no option but to go ahead and work things out for yourself in colonial times.

Thus, the effect of a frontier mentality on coparenting is evident. New Zealanders have had to rely on their own thinking to succeed, and are therefore well acquainted with the notion of working together and of being their own experts. This suggests that New Zealanders may well work as more supportive in coparenting as they are already attuned to working together rather than appealing to a specialist.

Furthermore, the well-known condemnation of achievers in New Zealand, coined as the Tall Poppy Syndrome, may also add to the concept that New Zealanders have the skills to

oversee their lives without reference to experts. This is a self-sufficient ideology, exhibited in the New Zealand tendency to believe in being your own expert, and doing so autonomously. The existence of the Tall Poppy Syndrome may validate the concept that New Zealanders are team spirited and do not appreciate success that does not encompass the entire county. For example, winning the Americas Cup, because this was celebrated as a victory for the nation, such success was eagerly revelled in.

Due to the isolated state of New Zealand, which encouraged the early Europeans to act as the experts, the Tall Poppy Syndrome has certainly had room to develop. Furthermore, New Zealand was advertised to be a class-less society where the workingman could achieve the life he deserved. Thus, there were inclinations then that New Zealanders would not take kindly to 'interfering' experts. This continues today, infiltrating many aspects of life in New Zealand, whereby it is often suggested that we all have an equal shot at life, and have done all right in the past without the help of anyone else. Again, this is in line with tall poppy thinking which suggests that we are all equal and self-sufficient. Should one dare to move above or below these boundaries, one is on their own.

Because New Zealand is a small and isolated country, supportive coparenting practices would be expected. It may also mean that practices are slow to change and are very specific to New Zealand and the culture. It also follows that coparenting values for New Zealanders may well be based on historical influences of New Zealand parenting, for example, Sir Truby King's conceptualisation of Plunket. Perhaps the most influential, and well-known early childhood service for New Zealanders, the Plunket Society was founded by Frederick Truby King in 1907, a man with a background in dairy farming drawn to science and hygiene on his model farm (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1981). Similarly, Plunket has been described as detailing what most New Zealand parents had wanted to hear, simply supporting

"...safe, sure, tough-minded, disciplined ways to make children conform." (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1981, p.10). The ideologies of this early Plunket way tend to remain true to parents today, suggesting that New Zealanders are slow to change in their parenting practices.

Egalitarianism.

There is an overwhelming sense of equality in New Zealand, but one that depresses and marginalises others. This kind of egalitarianism grants equality at a price, one that dictates assimilation, and should conformity not occur, outcasts are made and frowned upon. Those in need, or who stand by their own approaches, have little support in mainstream New Zealand, this occurs from a blind pioneering belief that New Zealand is a land of opportunity, and opportunity for all. As Bryant (1979) described it, it is assumed that each individual has equal opportunities and equal responsibilities, that we are in charge of our own destiny to an equal degree, and therefore, if we do not do well, we have only our individual selves to blame. In support, Oppenheim (1975), stated that "We know, of course, that in actuality people were treated unequally because of race, sex, or religion, or some other congenital characteristic....In spite, however, of these manifestly unfair practices, New Zealanders generally asserted that their Society made no such distinctions and probably believed this to be the case." (p.31). These comments are further argued by numerous other authors for example, Bell (1996), Consedine (1989), Willmott (1989), and Mead (1978).

Similarly, Ritchie and Ritchie (1978) discussed the Hill Report recommendations to not make special provisions for Māori and Polynesian children; they stated that the comments made illustrated "...New Zealand egalitarianism flying blindly in the face of social realities and cultural entitlements..." (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1978, p.43). Additionally, Ritchie and Ritchie (1970) questioned "Is ours a society where "egalitarianism" is achieved at the cost of an equally spread sense of deprivation?" (p.152). Sadly, what is believed to be equality to

many Pākehā in New Zealand, actually equates to assimilation.

Pākehā New Zealanders tend to overlook unique differences in order that conformity is achieved. The effect of egalitarianism on coparenting then is based upon the notion that everyone has the same access to resources, and thus, the same capabilities. It should be noted that while this is well documented as the egalitarian *myth*, many New Zealanders believe it to be true. Therefore in such an egalitarian context, coparenting may be approached more equally in theory by both parents in New Zealand, and so it is proposed that many New Zealanders would believe that parenting is shared by both parents. However the reality may see women in charge of the majority of the child rearing. "...where the children are concerned the fathers are abrogating responsibility to the mothers who, often feeling inadequate to the task, want to see more of a partnership than actually exists." (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1978, p.101). This suggests that the fathers are encouraging the egalitarian myth, and that the father directs the terms of coparenting more so than the mother.

Egalitarianism is particularly pertinent to Pākehā coparenting. Such a standpoint ignores individual needs and differences to a point of disadvantage. The effect of this on child development is evident in socialization development. The continued lack of appreciation for others' differences and favour of Pākehā ideals, encourages the livelihood of the egalitarian myth.

The effect of the egalitarian myth on Māori coparenting may operate differently. They tend to be on the receiving end of the myth, bearing the brunt of inferiority, dissention, disadvantage and alienation of land and culture. Therefore coparenting may be affected by egalitarianism in a "make-do" fashion. Māori parents may try to coparent with what ever they have immediately available, without seeking further resources. Furthermore, the awareness of

Pākehā keeping an eye on their behaviour may make it even harder for Māori parents to seek assistance or support. As a culture strong on whānau support, and who have experienced colonisation and the breakdown of this support structure, coparenting and child development may well be hindered.

As commented by Davey (1990), "The three great divides of ethnicity, gender and wealth are clearly linked and their effects inextricably interwoven. We cannot afford to go on believing that New Zealanders are born equal." (p.76).

Masculinity.

Closely related to other areas of the New Zealand psyche is the ideology of the 'Kiwi bloke'. While Kiwis profess equality, this is a society that continues to call on sex stereotyping. In additional support, Law (1997) has stated that "New Zealand culture is saturated with interest in the nature of masculinity." (p.23). The typical Kiwi bloke is self reliant, suspicious of emotional attachment with women and is a sturdy, tough and dependable individual (Bell, 1996). Fougere (1990) stated that the civic religion of New Zealand is in fact rugby, racing and beer, while Wolfe (1991) and Law (1997) have also echoed this comment. It may also be worth noting that these are the favoured (or hailed as so) pastimes of New Zealand *men.*

The effect of such thinking on coparenting is evident in the realisation that men tend to remain the head of the home, while the mother does the majority of the child rearing, as was illustrated in the work by Ritchie and Ritchie (1978) discussed earlier. This may seem to contradict earlier comments on egalitarianism, however, it should be noted that New Zealand is first and foremost driven by a masculine ideal, as are many places, however, what is more unique here is the influence of the egalitarian myth - a myth constructed by men. As

illustrated by Ritchie and Ritchie (1978), men in New Zealand are in a position to encourage an ideal of equality but are in the more dominant position to participate as they wish. Therefore, this places strain on the concept of coparenting. It is proposed here that through the dominance of masculinity, fathers direct coparenting, but the actual child rearing is left to mothers to undertake. As noted earlier, the nature of coparenting interactions may effect the emotional and social development of the child, as well as the general familial atmosphere. This coparenting situation may create stress factions in the relationship, that tend to exacerbate hostile interactions. However, through the cultural influence of egalitarianism, New Zealanders like to believe that they are part of an equal society, and the New Zealand male claims to be a part of this. This supports a society that can endorse sex stereotyping and yet men assert that they do their fair share. Although this is in itself sexist, New Zealanders love to believe in the egalitarian myth and are proud of the strong and solid men of this country who can also be there for their children.

Jane and James Ritchie are well known for their work on New Zealand families. They have suggested that New Zealand culture has an ideology of violence, so much so that it has become accepted as a 'fact of life' and is often considered necessary (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1981). This is encouraged by the ideology of the Kiwi bloke identity - a strong, physical, unrelenting man, out to battle the harsh conditions, and provide for his family. This ideology inturn supports the role of the male.

The effect of male dominance tends to endorse physical behaviour from boys. This is also related to an acceptance of violence, as discussed by Ritchie and Ritchie (1981). Together, coparenting is impacted on by violence and masculinity whereby fathers tend to be more comfortable with aggression than mothers. In support of this Jane Ritchie wrote "All New Zealand mothers find the aggressiveness of their children hard to bear." (Ritchie, 1975,

p.48). Such practices may tend to cause hostility due to these discrepancies in acceptance of violence, creating coparenting difficulties, and child development effects.

The acceptance of violence is also evident in Māori homes, comments such as, "Māori parents praise less, punish even more and reason even less do pākehā lower income parents." (Ritchie, 1975, p.51), as well as, "Our data show that while non-Māori New Zealanders hit their child frequently, Māoris hit them even more often." (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1981, p.22) go some way to support this. The acceptance of violence by Māori is further borne out in criminal statistics and child abuse reports whereby, in 1981, Māori and Polynesian children were being abused six times as much as Pākehā children. (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1981). Sadly the statistics of today as reported in *The Social Report 2001* of New Zealand, stated that Māori children were assessed as being abused or neglected at a rate of 12.0 Māori children per 1,000, compared with the non-Māori rate of 5.3 children per 1,000. Although these statistics are reliant on the abuse or neglect being detected or reported, it appears that Māori children do suffer significantly more so than non-Māori children, lending support to the notion that violence is more readily accepted in Māori homes. Thus, it is considered here that the acceptance of masculinity will affect New Zealand coparenting, and in a negative fashion.

Conformity & Autonomy

Two constructs, which have been suggested to be major forces in the shaping of moralistic ideology in this country, are religiosity and social conformity (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1981). This is a nation of people who tend to be more conservative in regard to change and moral issues, but do tend to follow the crowd (Gold & Webster, 1990; Ritchie & Ritchie, 1981). However, New Zealand is also pulled in the direction of autonomy - this is, after all, a country of geographical isolation, which has prided itself on do-it-yourself skills and ability

(Gold & Webster, 1990).

As an example of the New Zealand drive for autonomy, Openshaw & Shuker (1988) have offered one aspect of the New Zealand culture, that of anti-Americanism. Indeed, winning the Americas Cup has been celebrated as one of New Zealand's most sweetest and illustrious triumphs. This drive supports the notion that New Zealand parents will coparent as they see fit, and not necessarily on the advice of experts. Furthermore, they may be very private in their parenting practices but support a general code of parenting behaviour. As for their particular coparenting relationship, this may be characterised by autonomous roles, yet ones that conform to both personal and cultural expectations.

In terms of Māori autonomy and conformity, Huia Tomlins Johnke (1997) discussed the struggle of Māori women to uphold both Pākehā and Māori expectations. "Māori women's experiences are about survival in two often contradictory worlds of te ao [the way of] Māori and te ao Pākehā which render multiple realities in two separate spheres. As a result, Māori women are in a constant transition form one reality to another." (p.110). This statement reiterates the challenges bestowed upon Māori to conform to their own cultural values and beliefs, and yet embrace those of Pākchā norms. The desire of some Māori to be valued in their own right, and be self-governing, is an example of autonomous desires. In terms of coparenting, this may transpire towards Māori parents exhibiting different coparenting behaviours. In particular, their conformity with cultural expectations to behave in either more traditional Māori ways, or to conform with Pākehā ideals of parenting. Furthermore, some urban Māori may wish to coparent in more traditional ways, but in a modern day setting, suggesting a personal need for autonomy from mainstream cultural beliefs and influences.

Ritchie and Ritchie (1978) reported that "New Zealand society is often castigated for sameness, dullness and a high level of conformity....Conformity is the concept with which we cuddle ourselves. We are also said to be complacent and smug." (p.179). This statements supports the contention that New Zealanders tend towards conformity within their own culture. Therefore, many aspect of parenting within a culture may be true across the majority as conformity appears to be such a strong feature of the New Zealand life style. That is, as long as it is intra-national. In the greater scheme of things however, New Zealanders like to prove their self-worth over and above the achievements of others foreign to New Zealand.

Clearly, the tug of autonomy and conformity is evident throughout many aspects of life within New Zealand. This impacts on the parenting evidenced through the desire to follow the guidelines set out by organisations such as Plunket - which, in early years were to embrace routine and strict discipline, it encourages the notion that parents work as units or larger whānau units for both autonomous and conformist reasons. These aspects of the New Zealand psyche are suggested to influence coparenting whereby New Zealand parents are torn between supporting the partner in order to maintain cultural expectations of conformity, just as in a larger context New Zealanders are expected to conform to general standards and beliefs. On the other hand, they are expected to coparent autonomously - expect certain roles to be undertaken by each parent and in a manner which almost innately believes in its' own self-worth.

Summary.

It is suggested here that the cultural ideals discussed, impact on the way New Zealanders parent, and thus, further investigation of these must be included in the present investigation. Conformity and autonomy are mentioned here as they link all of the New Zealand psyche aspects discussed here. New Zealand parenting is much like New Zealand

culture in general - a tug between conformity and autonomy. For Pākehā, conformity to hold mainstream egalitarian beliefs, to value and embrace men, to be proud of our isolation and succeed as a 'team'. For Māori, conformity to Pākehā ideals, and conformity to their own cultural expectations. On the other hand, autonomy encourages New Zealand Pākehā to push for individual achievement, (although conformist values urge not to forget those who support you) to be proud of New Zealand's frontier mentality, strength, masculinity, and colonisation - marvelling at what they have done for Māori. Autonomy as it relates to Māori may be considered as the right to be recognised for positive values, as a culture of its own, to rise from attempts of assimilation. Individual achievement from the traditional Māori perspective is of much lesser value than it is for Pākehā. Autonomy to coparent as larger whānau units, to not feel judged by Pākehā standards. To be encouraged to be better parents in ways that recognise cultural values.

Therefore, the current work intends to synthesise Māori and Pākehā cultural values and parenting, to create an understanding of how their coparenting behaviours and expectations are constructed.

Coparenting.

Metge (1995) noted that "If future research and "intervention" aims to be relevant in Aotearoa/New Zealand, there is a case for moving away from the dyadic focus of the earlier parent-child interaction work." (p.67). Indeed, this thesis is concerned with this also, and therefore focuses on the coparenting alliance and the interaction of that on the child. However, it must be considered that culture has a role to play. It is intended that Chapter Seven shall discuss the implications of the New Zealand parenting influences reported here, and the interactions that may occur between parents as a result. This coparenting partnership

whether characterised by antagonism or supportive interactions, may draw upon notions from other cultures, but primarily hold their own standing.

Conclusion.

It has been discussed in this chapter that coparenting and culture are intertwined. Specifically, the cultural parenting practices and influences of Caucasian North Americans, Native Americans, African Americans, and New Zealand Pākehā and Māori have been outlined. These trends convey an understanding of what it is to parent in each of these cultures, and highlights differences and similarities in approach. Parallels can be drawn between the native cultures in terms of parenting and thus coparenting behaviours, whereby the coparenting consists of many units. The European-based cultures also displayed parallels on the basis of individual as opposed to collective, identities. The underlying thesis however, is that differences are evident from the mainstream North American experience, and these in turn, affect the child rearing patterns and expectations that the parents holds and encourages. The coparenting alliance is similarly affected. The expectation that whānau will share the supervision and discipline of the child, acknowledges the role of many others in the parenting of the child. This is in stark contrast to the Pākehā parent who may consider such actions as neglectful. (Metge, 1995).

Nevertheless, it has been illustrated in this chapter that cultural parenting differences exist and that it is plausible that coparenting is therefore similarly affected. Coparenting and cultural expectations have been outlined and linked together, suggesting that there are aspects of the New Zealand psyche which can influence coparenting. The geographical isolation of New Zealand has encouraged the development of do-it-yourself ideals, as well as working together to meet a common goal. As will be discussed in the following chapter, New

Zealanders, perhaps again due to their geographical isolation, or their stubborn belief in their own abilities, may also be slow to change in their ways, and thus retain a masculine-based identity transpiring into female driven families, dominated by coparenting beliefs which have underlying masculine tendencies.

Coparenting in terms of the culture experienced and embraced, varies with the fundamental approach of the culture in question. Parents with individual-based cultures may look towards a more autonomous approach to coparenting from their extended family, and in their roles with each other. However, coparenting in a collective-based culture tends to see a large group of peoples working towards the common goal of raising the child, but each retaining specific areas of concern in parenting. Coparenting in this circumstance is a group effort and entails that many more facets of the coparenting relationship will be evident.

Chapter Four

Parenting in New Zealand

It is evident that parenting and culture walk hand in hand. It is also evident that the work on coparenting seriously lacks depth in understanding when concerned with populations that differ from the typical Caucasian North American. However, this research hopes to address this dearth of information, and resynthesise that available research to predict coparenting in New Zealand. To undertake such a process, parenting as it exists in New Zealand must be discussed. The influences that push and pull the New Zealand mother and father need to be identified as they are conceptualised through the culture and born by the parent.

From this anchorage, this chapter intends to construct the site of parenting in New Zealand through the illustration of Pākehā and Māori parenting beliefs. This reflection of culture and parenting expectations and behaviour lend support to the notion that parenting is culture dependent, and likewise, that coparenting is constructed according to cultural specifications.

Parenting in New Zealand.

As the approaches to parenting for Māori and Pākehā differ so greatly, it is not possible to consider one general New Zealand way of parenting. Thus it shall be considered separately the values of the Pākehā style, the traditional Māori style, and finally, the urban Māori style.

Generally speaking, Ritchie and Ritchie (1970) have detailed that New Zealand parents are particularly concerned with "...misdemeanours, correction and prevention." As shall be outlined, these and other aspects of the New Zealand way are evident in parenting practices.

Pākehā Parenting Concepts.

Typically, Pākehā children were brought up in environments of strict routine, and were led to believe that they belonged to a pioneering spirit. New Zealand is a relatively safe country to grow up in, and the outdoor environment is considered very important to the lifestyle and identity (Mead, 1978). Responsibility for child rearing lies primarily with both of the parents (McDonald, 1975; Ritchie & Ritchie, 1978). Thus, a coparenting alliance is a naturally occurring relationship.

Smart and Smart (1973) sampled New Zealand and American students, questioning their perceptions of the parenting they had experienced. They concluded that New Zealand children perceived their parents to be more supportive, controlling and punishing than other included samples. In particular, the New Zealand mothers were rated highly in all three areas, yet both parents were seen to be active in child rearing. In terms of sex differences, the children perceived parents to be more supportive towards daughters, and more punishing of sons.

The contribution of the New Zealand Pākehā father to the coparenting relationship, as reported by Ritchie & Ritchie (1978) is based upon concern for obedience, good manners and behaviour at the meal table, no television when eating, tidy rooms, and the respect of possessions, house and property. They expect instructions to be followed, and do not like to use materialistic rewards. On the other hand, the contribution of New Zealand Pākehā mothers is based upon a concern of spoiling the child (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1970). While they are deeply concerned by the aggressiveness of their children (Ritchie, 1975), although, ironically, the lower income mothers sampled still tended to rely on physical punishment in controlling their children (Ritchie, 1975). Evidence gathered by the Ritchies tends to suggest

that on the whole, New Zealanders are sensible, taking a middle-of-the-road approach, and are "...somewhat conservative, somewhat traditional and rather stable." (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1970, p.51). Given that this statement is dated, the essence of it suggests that he may remain true. The effect of theses practices on coparenting may lie in that the practices evident are slow to change, therefore behaviours documented in research should be relatively stable. It also suggests that mothers in New Zealand will continue to oversee the majority of the parenting, and experience guilt if they do not.

The work undertaken by Able, Lennan, Park, Tipene-Leach, Finau, and Everard (1999) surveyed a broad range of ethnic communities in the Auckland region, and surmised that Pākehā parents relied heavily on professionals for child rearing advice. Furthermore, the ideal of being good parents encouraged feelings of anxiety and guilt for many of the couples.

Summary

In summary, Pākehā parenting research is dependent on studies carried out, often decades ago. This limitation, however, is somewhat resolved by the general findings that Pākehā parents tend to be slow to change, and retain stable beliefs and family lives, therefore suggesting that there is an element of retention of these behaviours in the present day.

Generally speaking, the Pākehā coparenting relationship is one based on shared responsibilities, towards a common goal of supportive coparenting. However, traditional sex roles, and cultural expectations to be a good mother, tend to see the mother in the primary parenting role. The Pākehā mother may be torn between cultural beliefs to support the fathers' parenting input, and by other cultural beliefs enticing her to be a good parent herself. Should these two aspects conflict, the Pākehā mother may find herself in a state of cognitive dissonance or which may lead to antagonistic coparenting, and culminating in familial

disharmony.

As New Zealanders cope with the demands of both autonomy and conformity, so too, does the Pākehā parent experience the pull between taking on board the word of experts, with the New Zealand tradition of child rearing as you see fit. In terms of coparenting, this may see them mother willing to embrace professional advice, while the fathers doing as they know best. This may create antagonistic aspects to the Pākehā coparenting relationship.

Māori Parenting Concepts.

As will be further discussed, Māori parenting has been divided into two separate approaches. One is based on traditional methods, and the other on methods that have evolved as a result of the urbanisation of the whānau structure.

Traditional Māori parenting. The traditional Māori whānau[1] was oriented around cooperative foundations, whereby membership was ancestrally based, (Durie, 1997a; Metge, 1995). Traditionally, child rearing could be considered as 'sharing the caring' and was the responsibility of all adults (Metge, 1995; Ritchie & Ritchie, 1978). The role of the parents was very basic, their main concerns were to feed and clothe the children. Furthermore, the parents tended to refrain from praise and verbal interaction with their offspring, (Metge, 1995).

Meanwhile, the kaumātua (respected elders - grandmothers and grandfathers), were

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1 Definitions for whānau are numerous, and vary with context. The closest English understanding to whānau in this context is of the extended family. It is a concept of family that does not easily fit with the European experience of family. While whānau denotes family, the context it is used in ascertains whether it is descent based, the people it encompasses, and the relationships involved.

responsible for the transmission of tikanga (values and practices), the development of linguistic skills and reasoning ability (Metge, 1995). Generally, the grandparents would take more interest in the children than the parents, using praise and affection to build self-esteem in their mokopuna (grandchildren) (Metge, 1995). The effective kaumātua were well aware of their responsibility to support their grandchildren and pass on their culture and history (Metge, 1995). The role of aunts and uncles lay somewhere between the parents and the grandparents. They were considered to be more approachable than parents and were important educators (Metge, 1995). Lastly, the older siblings were also allocated roles in caring for the children of the whānau. Traditionally, the adults doted on the babies, however once they became toddlers, the siblings would take over (Metge, 1995).

This caring structure is further supported by Pere (1992) who provided the details in Table 4.1 as part of the 1992 Parent Support Conference. It is clearly illustrated that different whānau members play particular roles in child rearing.

Collectively, the youngest members of the whānau were receiving care and education from all sectors. For the parents, this alleviated the stress of child raising considerably. For the children, this assured a well-rounded development, and increased safety. The parents were always calm in the knowledge that no matter where the child was, there would be someone else there to watch over, support, and discipline their children.

Table 4.1.

Traditional Māori Parenting...Who? What? How? Pere (1992).

PASSAGE	HELPERS IN PARENTING	HOW THEY HELP
Infancy	Tribal mothers and fathers	Building healthy bodies, matrices and bonding.
Childhood	Tribal grandmothers and grandfathers	Structuring and modelling so that the children see the adults action and demonstrate qualities of life that are important to the total development of the child, empowerment through developing her/him personally emotionally, socially, culturally, spiritually, physically, ethically and intellectually.
Pubescent	Urban grouping and network e.g. Kōhanga Reo Whānau	
Adolescent	Tribal or chosen mentors Tribal brothers and sisters, other peers, teachers.	
Wo / man hood	Positive marriage partner	Partnership role, building on each other's strengths through caring and love.
Mid Life	Interest groups e.g. marae committee, church guilds etc.	Through keeping a balance between individual and group endeavour. Able to control and guide behaviour through the conscious self among others.
New Life	Tribal brothers and sisters Tribal daughters and sons Tribal granddaughters and grandsons or other similar structures.	Through celebrating your life's experiences and acquired skills through learning from your expertise, and you learning to keep up with each generation through positive communication. Being in touch with the universal consciousness.

Post-urban migration. The group of people known as Urban Māori are a very diverse group, creating difficulties in defining exactly who they are. Foremost, is the obvious expectation that they dwell in urban areas, however, this may be where the similarities end. It is commonly accepted that urban Māori no longer or cannot acknowledge their Māori whakapapa (ancestry or genealogy) or culture. This may occur for any number of reasons,

and may or may not be of concern to the person involved. However, there are also suggestions of urban Māori who "did not necessarily regard themselves as any less Māori than their tribal relatives." (Durie, 1998, p.94).

McCarthy (1997) outlined the context of Māori parenting, stating that "Prior to colonisation Māori society was controlled, structured and organised in a way that was informed by a Māori philosophical base... [However, in present times] unquestioned notions of cultural continuity between home and society no longer exist. The complexities of living in a society dominated by an alien culture have serious implications for Māori parents and caregivers who wish to ensure that their children are strong and proficient in their language and culture, yet equally have the skills and knowledge to cope in the Pākehā world." (p.25). This creates coparenting turmoil. The coparenting relationships may change in their physical nature, as well as what is expected of them. It is suggested very strongly here that culture is fundamental to the coparenting relationship - in how it presents and behaves.

In discussing the components of urban Māori parenting, Abel et al., (1999) commented on the infant care practices of Māori in Auckland, stating that "While some practices were similar to the norms of the dominant Pākehā culture, others were shaped by more traditional Māori influences, such as the central role of the whānau in the raising of children and the importance of the symbolic and actual link to iwi." (p.22). Suggesting that there is two general patterns of behaviour. The urban Māori considered here are those who no longer follow the traditional style of child rearing, yet do not inherently follow the Pākehā style. The fact that they do not use traditional methods will be discussed further, as it is more a matter of not being able to due to the broken down whānau structure in urban settings. Furthermore, this is not to suggest that traditional methods are left out altogether, but instead that the typical traditional child rearing process of Māori is greatly altered in the urban

context. It should be noted that some Māori do not identify with their ancestry at all, and have been removed from the culture for so long that they tend to align with many Pākehā ideals, and thus parent like Pākehā. Therefore, these once-were-Māori are not included in this particular grouping of urban Māori.

As Metge (1995) described, the migration lead to a childcare crisis. The child rearing process as it traditionally occurred no longer had the support structure to encourage positive development, however, many of the practices continued. Māori were pepper-potted across the cities, thus destroying or at the very least, limiting social support from their whānau. Ritchie and Ritchie (1981) stated that the lack of traditional supports and surroundings acted as a stressor for Māori parents. Combined with low socio-economic status, (due to the association with stress) this could be considered a critical factor in the higher use of severe punishment, and the higher rates of abuse in Māori families. McCarthy (1997) outlined the conditions Māori experienced as part of Pākehā domination. The long-term effects of assimilative policies and practices, she wrote, have led to the "fractured whānau unit" (p.30). It is considered here that this conceptualisation of the whānau in urban settings, is a very real and interesting consideration of the situation. As suggested by McCarthy's (1997) description of the 'fractured whānau unit' and outlined by Metge (1995), some urban Māori have continued to parent as they remember their own parents doing. However, they may have been unaware as children, that there were many more coparenting partners than just the typical Pākehā practice of two parents, that they were currently surrounded by. This unawareness of the specific roles that other whānau members held in the childrearing partnership, lead urban Māori parents and children to suffer in this out-of-context environment, thus creating the fractured whānau unit. Furthermore, urban Māori may have considered that Pākehā parents nearby would watch out for their children, as others had done in traditional settlements, and yet Pākehā parents believed this assumption to be neglectful. Urban Māori, however,

considered the Pākehā neighbours inactiveness to be neglectful. This is reiterated in Metge (1995) who stated "While increasing numbers of Māori parents consciously and effectively adapt their parenting practice to current circumstances, others go on doing what comes naturally, apparently giving little thought to their child-raising practice of the ideas on which it is based. Such behaviour is often perceived as selfish and neglectful." (p.207). In terms of coparenting, this conceptualisation illustrates that coparenting in traditional forms was built upon a multi-facet coparenting partnership. However, this has failed to transfer to the urban setting, creating problems for the Māori coparenting relationship. The Māori mother and father as one unit, are missing the remaining units required to form the whole coparenting alliance, commonly leaving the mother-father relationship under considerable stress as a result. This foreign coparenting relationship may see each parent act on aspects of their own cultural expectations, as well as pressures from the Pākehā parents, such as being a good mother, pushing the urban Māori mother to take more responsibility for the child-rearing than what would normally be expected in the traditional setting. While the child may miss out on other essential elements of the traditional coparenting unit.

Metge's (1995) research suggested that while the key elements of descent, sharing the caring, working together and traditional values still tend to hold true, whānau had come to be scattered across cities, tending towards being self-sufficient and membership to whānau was very much optional. No longer were people living as one community, nor were they managing all aspects of life as a collective.

Thus, parents were feeling the stress of isolation and could no longer depend on the memories of their own childhood as a guide for rearing their children. However, initiatives such as Te Kōhanga Reo, and Kura Kaupapa schooling have attempted to address the need for Māori facilitated and focused education for their children. As a by-product, some Māori who

had been separated from their culture and heritage have found these organisations not only fruitful for their children, but also for themselves. These initiatives belong to the Māori Renaissance period, which continues to embrace and promote Māori culture in New Zealand.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has discussed the significance of culture, particularly as it interacts with coparenting behaviour and expectations. The intention of this chapter was to establish a place for culture alongside coparenting. It is hoped that not only is this evident, but that it is understood that coparenting cannot be understood without first relating the cultural experiences of parenting that apply to the family first.

As was outlined, the impact of culture has been well documented and should be acknowledged as a significant source of variance for parenting and child development. As a result, it is suggested here that culture-specific research is required when applying constructs across cultures. As previous authors have noted, the applicability of North American coparenting research findings on other culture samples, may be poor.

As further investigation in to the role of culture, the minorities of Native American and African American were discussed as these both share cultural and historical circumstance similarities with the New Zealand Māori. While it was noted that both groups of Americans share similar perceptions of life with Māori, and therefore coparenting predictions, they have sadly been studied too little. It appears that coparenting is an interesting topic and deserving of investigation in Caucasian American sample, but it is now time to explore the applicability of current standings of coparenting in other cultures. This chapter has illustrated that as approaches vary across cultures, so too do the conceptualisations behind the practices.

Therefore, this chapter has noted the significance of culture to the point where understanding coparenting research may require that the testing and/or interpretations of behaviour and interactions are reconceptualized.

Coparenting in this chapter, was described as an interplay between mother and father for individualistic societies, or between groups of nuclear and extended family members in collectivist societies. Thus, the very foundations of the coparenting alliance were structured according to cultural circumstances. Furthermore, coparenting is influenced by cultural forces of basic parental responsibilities as well as expectations of parental and partner roles. Therefore, it can be seen that not only does culture have a place alongside coparenting, but it also impacts and interacts with the coparenting process. As a result, the significance of culture cannot, and should not, be overlooked.

Chapter Five

Construction of Hypotheses

Chapter Four considered the specific topic of parenting in New Zealand. This could not have been considered without also discussing the cultural context of the life of the average Pākehā or Māori New Zealander. As has been noted by Stewart, Bond, Zaman, McBride-Chang, Rao, Ho, and Fielding, (1999), who stated that "Western models are the most highly developed and a logical place to start in studies of non-Western groups." (p.749), it is necessary here to develop from this foundation of research findings and suggestions, and generate the hypotheses that have been brought to light. In this chapter then, these shall be discussed, and predictions of New Zealand coparenting trends should emerge as a result.

It is intended that this chapter shall fulfil the aim of generating and discussing hypothesised coparenting behaviour in New Zealand by detailing the hypotheses as they have arisen in the preceding chapters. These shall be supported through firstly, a concise representation of the reported coparenting trends, secondly, Māori parenting will be reviewed and linked with the hypotheses, and thirdly, Pākehā will be treated in the same manner.

Hypotheses.

First and foremost, this thesis is based upon the premise that the definition and approach of coparenting is predicated by the culture in which it is experienced and bourn out. Therefore, it is hypothesised that New Zealand and North American coparenting will differ.

The second hypothesis is drawn from the first, and states that the cultural context is a necessary component in understanding the processes involved and the significance of the coparenting interactions.

A third hypothesis recognises the intra-national identities, in particular, the

predominate differences between Māori culture and Pākehā culture. Although it would be ignorant to consider Māori and Pākehā as representative of the one whole population, it is necessary to understand that intra-culture variations occur. In addition, the traditional Māori people considered here are those that embrace and/or form traditional whānau values and Māori lifestyle. Of further interest in this study is the recognition that Urban Māori may differ in their associations with their culture, therefore the Urban Māori considered here are those that still employ some traditional values, but in a manner which may no be as adaptive. Alternatively, other urban Māori have made the transition to incorporating more Western-based ideologies and practices, and therefore can be considered as exhibiting coparenting practices that are typical of Pākehā parents. Thus, it is hypothesised that traditional Māori coparenting relationships will occur differently from Pākehā coparenting relationships. Furthermore, it is considered that Pākehā will be relatively more like the Caucasian American expectations, while Māori will be relatively more different.

In summary, these hypotheses recognise the basis of culture in coparenting interactions, and prescribe that it will affect coparenting in distinct and predictable ways.

Trends.

The formulation of these hypotheses was based upon past research. One work that was based upon coparenting in infancy suggested that "...any given family dynamic may not show a like pattern of association with child adjustment across diverse ethnic groups." (McHale & Rasmussen, 1998, p.55). This, as well as other general suggestions that coparenting is important to investigate due to the impact it can have on child development, recognises the need to study coparenting across the cultural variations (Brody, Flor & Neubaum, 1998).

Trends in coparenting research suggest that culture plays an important role in coparenting interactions. For example, Brody, Flor & Neubaum (1998) discussed coparenting in African American settings, outlining the lack of research on this population, and highlighting their use of extended family in child-rearing. Hoffman & Moon (1999) detailed a multi-cultural study on paternal involvement in child rearing, suggesting that the personal characteristics and gender role attitude of the mother influenced her support for the fathers' involvement. This is related to culture in that gender role attitude may be influenced by cultural expectations. In their study of Chinese families, McHale, Rao & Krasnow (2000) stated that the standing of the coparenting construct was unknown for populations outside of North America, and went on to say that "...in many cultures levels of mutual parenting investment by the child's two parents differs markedly from that in Western cultures... it seems important to establish the applicability and limits of co-parenting constructs in cultures with divergent family practices and processes." (p.111).

In addition, the role of harmony appears to be a common theme. McHale and Rasmussen, (1998), McHale et al., (2000), Brody et al., (1998), Kitzmann, (2000), Hoffman and Moon (1999), and Brody, Stoneman, Smith and Gibson, (1999) have all noted the impact of cohesive interactions on coparenting and family relationships. This is particularly relevant to non-Western cultures, which value harmony and cohesiveness. Conversely, hostility has also emerged as a correlate of hostile-aggressive behaviour in children, suggesting that hostile coparenting interactions have a flow-on effect.

Another factor that may vary with culture is Brody et al.'s, (1999) finding that parental psychological resources were associated with family relationships and practices. One possible psychological resource is that of the extended family. Traditional Māori whānau

encompasses a larger group than the Pākehā family unit, and grants more family members direct influence in child-rearing, therefore, family networks can be considered psychological resources, and as a function of culture in this example, may influence the coparenting relationship.

On another tangent, it has been reported that Māori are highly concentrated in the low socio-economic (SES) bracket of New Zealand. It is noted that due to this tendency, that Brody et al., (1998) reported the effects of low SES on parenting relationships as negative, thus the efficacy of the coparenting partnership may be reduced.

It is also valuable to understand the parental characteristics that impact on coparenting. As these have already been discussed in preceding chapters, it is unnecessary to elaborate too fully, however, Russell and Russell (1994) have noted that parenting values significantly contribute to child development and adjustment outcomes, albeit in an indirect fashion. Furthermore, the personal characteristics and gender role attitudes the mother holds, influences the amount of support the she has for the father to be involved in the rearing of their children. Similarly, the feminism of the father, as explored in Deutsch, Lussier, Servis, (1993), acted as a significant predictor of paternal involvement in the care of his child, whereby feminism was positively associated with more paternal involvement.

This summary of the coparenting trends that have already been outlined, serves the purpose of providing a context in which to understand the presented hypotheses. The coparenting literature tends to acknowledge the significant impact of coparenting on the child, as well as the characteristics of culture and the parent in determining how the coparenting relationship might function.

Parenting Summaries.

Māori Parenting Summary.

This summary is provided in order to create an understanding of traditional Māori child-rearing environments. It is from this point that further discussion of coparenting can be made.

Demographically, Māori are over-populated in the low SES bracket, in criminal statistics, unemployment, underachievement in schools, and poor mental and physical health trends. As a people, Māori have been influenced by the historical forces of colonisation, urbanisation, and assimilation. Spiritually, traditional views retain the view that all things have a life force that must be respected and cherished. It is considered here that the impact of Pākehā, as well as the spiritual values of Māori, have contributed to the manner in which coparenting in whānau exists in modern times.

Traditional Māori Parenting. Traditional Māori parenting emphasises harmony, collectivism, shared caring, and the close relationship of parent and infant. Such an approach is comparable to the Chinese approach to parenting detailed in McHale, Rao, and Krasnow (2000) and Chao (1994), and to Native American experiences and familial interactions (Joe & Malach, 1998), and to a lesser extent, the approach of the African Americans, Willis (1998).

Furthermore, as there is so little understanding of Māori coparenting, it is necessary to allow the dictation of previous research on other cultures, in order to develop further knowledge. Most obviously, the familial interactions of the whānau in child rearing are considerably more complex in terms of relationships and roles involved, than that of Pākehā practices. Furthermore, the individualistic Pākehā society values autonomy, whereas Māori

seek conformity and more group-oriented success, therefore developing differing ways of interacting with the marital and familial coparent, and in what they encourage in their child's development. Such tendencies support the hypothesis that Māori and Pākehā will differ in coparenting approaches, and that Pākehā will be more similar to North American trends on the basis of sharing a Western-based culture.

Urban Māori Parenting. The Urban Māori of interest here, as discussed earlier, are those who continue to uphold many traditional parenting and cultural values - whether consciously or not, yet no longer have the whānau support structure that is required to successfully implement these practices in the urban environment. In particular, the lack of potential supervisors when the child is out of the parents' range of supervision, may not be considered by the parent. While these traditional coparents have disappeared, the practices encompassing them may not have.

This is an interesting and worthy phenomenon. For some Pākehā parents, such parenting may be frowned upon, particularly as there appears to be little room for awareness of the Māori culture in middle-class Pākehā society. However, this regurgitation of parenting expectations in a foreign environment incorporates an interaction of variables, requiring further discussion in Chapter Six.

Pākehā Parenting Summary.

New Zealand Pākehā parenting practices may be considered the norm of parenting by many New Zealanders, moreover, they may contend that is the correct way to raise a child, as this society values its' English foundations. They may even suggest that their parenting is superior to other practices outside of New Zealand, as New Zealanders tend to believe in their

dogged ability to overcome the odds, and emerge with do-it-yourself know-how, this is supported by Bell (1996). Pākehā fathers however, may tend to rely on their coparenting partners to dominate child rearing, as masculinity is a feature of the New Zealand society as a whole, this is inclusive of Māori parents as well.

As noted in the coparenting trends, the feminism of the father is associated with the paternal involvement in child rearing, thus suggesting that New Zealand men may be typically resistant to equal child-rearing responsibilities. overt marital conflict was positively associated with hostile-competitive coparenting behaviour, while nonegalitarian power in the relationship was positively associated with differences in coparenting involvement.

It appears that Pākehā parents may align with typical coparenting findings, predominately on the basis of their European roots and individualistic society. This entails that the available research will be applicable in the New Zealand setting, however it is suggested here that slight cultural variance may still appear in terms of being less concerned with professional opinions and outside support. Therefore, the coparenting relationship as experienced by the Pākehā parent may be one of supporting a general parenting expectation, yet, without relying on too much external support.

In relation to the general coparenting findings that were outlined in Chapter Two, Pākehā coparenting may also contain nonegalitarian power, which has been shown by McHale (1995) to be positively associated with differences in coparenting involvement, which in turn may lead on to hostile-competitive behaviour, which then influences child development in terms of more hostile-aggressive behaviour. These negative parental interactions may then account for lower family cohesion, less support or engagement by both parents, more family negativity, lower family warmth, and less democratic parenting.

As can be seen, the Pākehā coparenting construct may be a combination of Western ideals, isolative know-how, and non-egalitarian behaviour. The research currently undertaken in North America, may then, account for many aspects of this coparenting alliance.

Conclusion.

The fundamental hypothesis that coparenting is influenced by culture is supported by past research, and the existence of culture parenting differences as they are currently understood and studied. However, this investigation cannot ignore the finer details of the interactions involved when parenting in New Zealand. The acknowledge of the Traditional Māori, Urban Māori, and Pākehā coparenting formulations brings about hypotheses that suggest that Māori and Pākehā will differ again, but that Pākehā draw more parallels with the North American Caucasian data, while Māori align more with Native American and Chinese ideologies.

Therefore, the hypotheses presented are founded upon a body of research testifying the trends of coparenting in North America and China, and of the research on the New Zealand psyche. As has been documented, existing literature supports the contention that coparenting counts - it is the case that associations are emerging that involve the coparenting relationship and child development or child adjustment. As a result, it is considered that the answering of these hypotheses shall inspire future work on coparenting in New Zealand.

Chapter Six

Development and Discussion of Conceptual Models

The notion of recognising the involvement of culture with coparenting has been well explored thus far, as has the understanding that coparenting analyses provide useful insights into child-rearing and subsequent child development related outcomes. As a result, it is intended in this chapter to develop a conceptual model, which encompasses such an approach to coparenting. This model particularly acknowledges the role of culture, and therefore provides a population-specific context for understanding coparenting - as it is carried out, as well as the effects it produces.

In order to achieve the aim of synthesising the available research and knowledge presented into a culture-specific model of coparenting, a general conceptual model will be put forward detailing the role of culture. However, to appreciate the applicability of this model, another two models shall be presented which relate to New Zealand culture, in particular, discussing the implications for Māori and Pākehā.

Conceptualising Culture and Coparenting.

A Broad Approach.

It is necessary to understand the influence of culture on coparenting, should we wish to utilise the findings of past research which has primarily sampled Caucasian North Americans. Therefore, the model presented in Figure 6.1 outlines the specific role of culture and the context that it creates for parenting relationships.

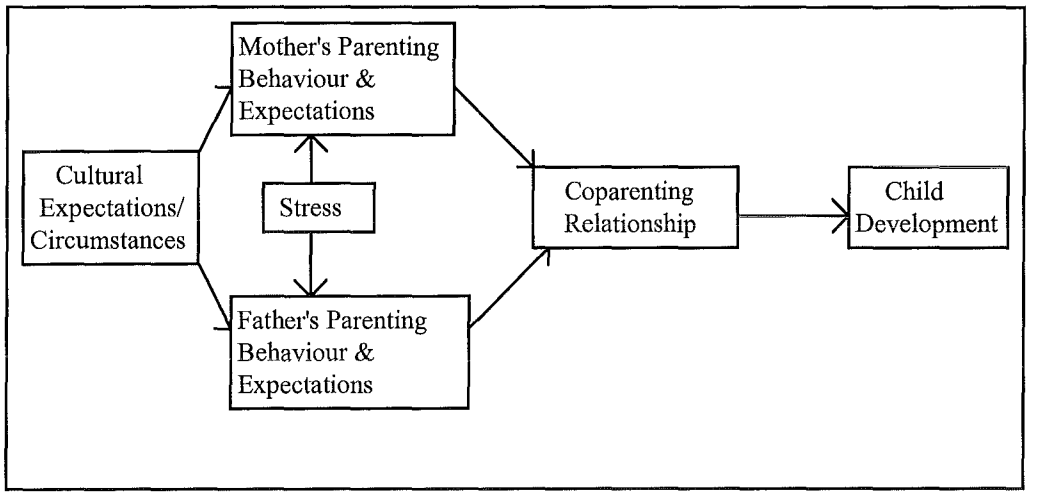

Figure 6.1. Conceptual Model of Culture and Coparenting.

As is clearly illustrated, and as expected, this model acknowledges the significant impact of culture in determining coparenting relationships. It also implies that culture indirectly effects child development. Therefore, the research that is currently available may not be well suited to New Zealand parents. In order to consider how this may be so, it is necessary to understand the world-views of the New Zealand Pākehā and Māori populations. The cultural expectations that govern the coparenting relationship and child rearing need to be explored in order to appreciate whether the research findings may be relevant.

This model sets the stage for coparenting and culture, so that coparenting may be understood across cultures. It accounts for the findings that parental personalities, culture and stress, influence coparenting. The level to which stress is experienced, and the triggers for it may function as a result of cultural expectations also. Should for example, the mother expect that the father would be the primary discipliner of the family, as based on her own cultural

expectations, and yet the father believed it should be equal, the stress levels may be higher for this mother than another mother who expected they would share the responsibility.

Other findings can be also be accounted for, statements acknowledging that psychological resources were related to family relationship quality can be accounted for through the pathway of stress on the parent, through to child development. The quality of the coparenting relationship has been said to relate to child development also, in the model, this is evident in the coparenting relationship that emerges from the parents and their expectations. Predictions that nonegalitarian power may be associated with negative coparenting relationships may be accounted for through cultural expectations, as the power that is exerted and accepted in a relationship, occurs as a function of cultural expectations. Furthermore, whether the other parent accepts this level, will be bourn through the stress levels that the parents experiences.

The cultural expectations that may impact on parenting are various, and will be discussed in more specific detail for Māori and Pākehā. As neither parent grows in isolation from their culture, they join together with their own preconceived ideas of the parental partnership, and may be quite unaware that variations exist in terms of parenting and the family. Furthermore, and importantly, they may not be aware that these variations exist with good developmental and adjustment outcomes for children. Inevitably, these ideologies meet head-on in the coparenting alliance. Parents who are aware of their partner's cultural values, and who respect their contributions, may find coparenting a different undertaking altogether from those who coparent in antagonistic ways. Furthermore, the multi-cultural nature of New Zealand may see coparenting relationships across cultures. Such a relationship may harbour antagonistic elements should the couple be unable to reconcile their approaches, creating a hostile coparenting, child-rearing, environment. Another interesting situation may

occur when the solo parent of one culture, interacts with the grandparents of another culture. Such circumstances may see a mother, for example, eager to raise her child as she sees fit, yet feeling the pressure to educate her child in the other half of his or her heritage. This may be in conflict with what the mother wants, or she may feel under-resourced to adequately do so. This coparenting relationship of mother and grandparents, may cause friction, and perhaps a hostile-competitive nature to it may emerge. However, unless this becomes evident to the child, there may be little negative effect on his or her development. Again, this coparenting relationship is significantly influenced by culture. Such circumstances warrant further investigation.

Of course, culture can interact differently in this equation. The influence can be seen to be quite permeating - interacting with all the parent does. Or, it may act silently, apparent in only certain circumstances where a scripted behaviour pattern emerges, as in the case of the Urban Māori of interest here.

The expectations included in the model may include the sex role attitudes of the coparent, and their involvement with the rearing of the child. Each of these has been shaped by the culture that they have experienced during their own childhood and development. Furthermore, as the child grows, the parents may experience further cultural influences from their extended family as new experiences occur in the development of the child.

Development of this model is supported by the reported literature thus far, which suggests that culture should acknowledge parenting and child development variations, and that the coparenting relationship may effect child development. However, this broad approach needs further refinement in favour of the culture of interest. Therefore, using this model as a foundation, New Zealand Māori and Pākehā coparenting models shall be outlined.

New Zealand Parenting.

Conceptualisation of Pākehā Parenting.

Pākehā parenting is characterised by western societal notions, particularly those embracing individualism and personal success. However, due to such factors as geographical isolation, New Zealanders have come to rely on resourceful means for meeting the demands of daily living. Such an approach to life is evident in Pākehā parenting practices, and these go on to impact the construct of coparenting.

In Figure 6.2, the core aspects of the New Zealand psyche, as outlined earlier in Chapter Three, which pertain to the Pākehā experience of culture and parenting, are included as having an impact of the cultural expectations of parenting and the coparenting relationship. The Pākehā model developed suggests that these aspects go on to influence the parental behaviours and expectations which interact and influence the development of the child.

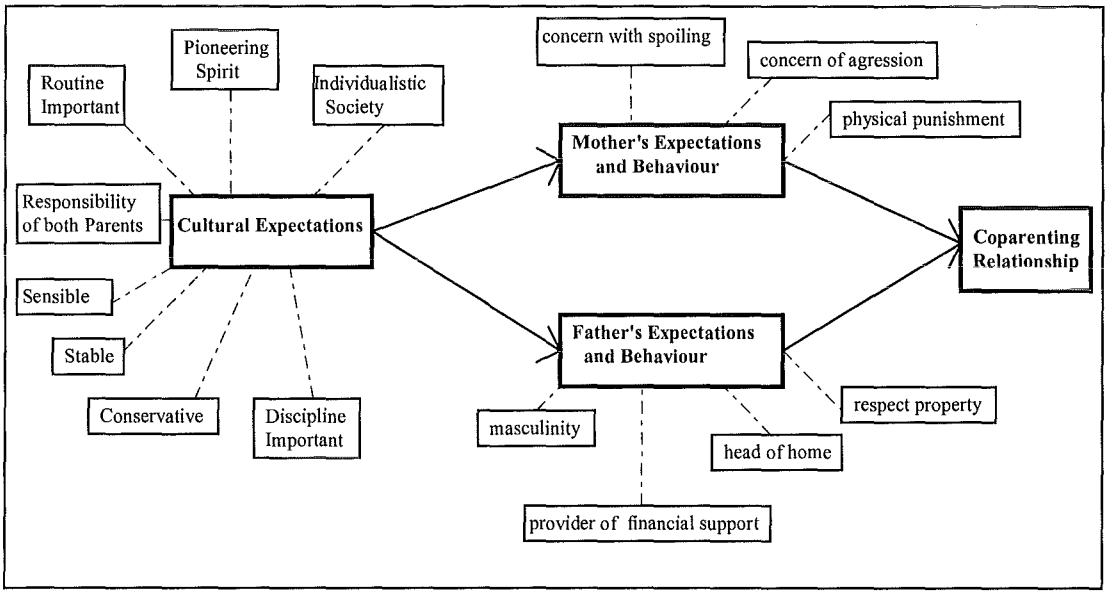

Figure 6.2. Pākehā Coparenting Influences.

It can be seen from Figure 6.2 that some North American coparenting trends would not be unsuitable for this population. For example, Chao (1994) noted the Caucasian North American values of individualism, independence, self-expression, separateness, and uniqueness. Similarly, Ritchie and Ritchie (1978) reported that "New Zealand life and its institutions exist primarily in an Anglo-Saxon tradition." (p.174) Or, however, Māori parenting differs from this again as can be seen in the following section.

The acceptance of using physical punishment by Pākehā mothers is supported by Ritchie and Ritchie (1970) who stated that smacking is a primary control technique for these mothers, and often the only method utilised. Therefore, this is also included in the model of Pākehā coparenting.

Conceptualisation of Traditional Māori Parenting.

Figure 6.3 outlines the influence of culture on Māori parenting and acknowledges that the coparenting alliance differs in structure for traditional Māori.

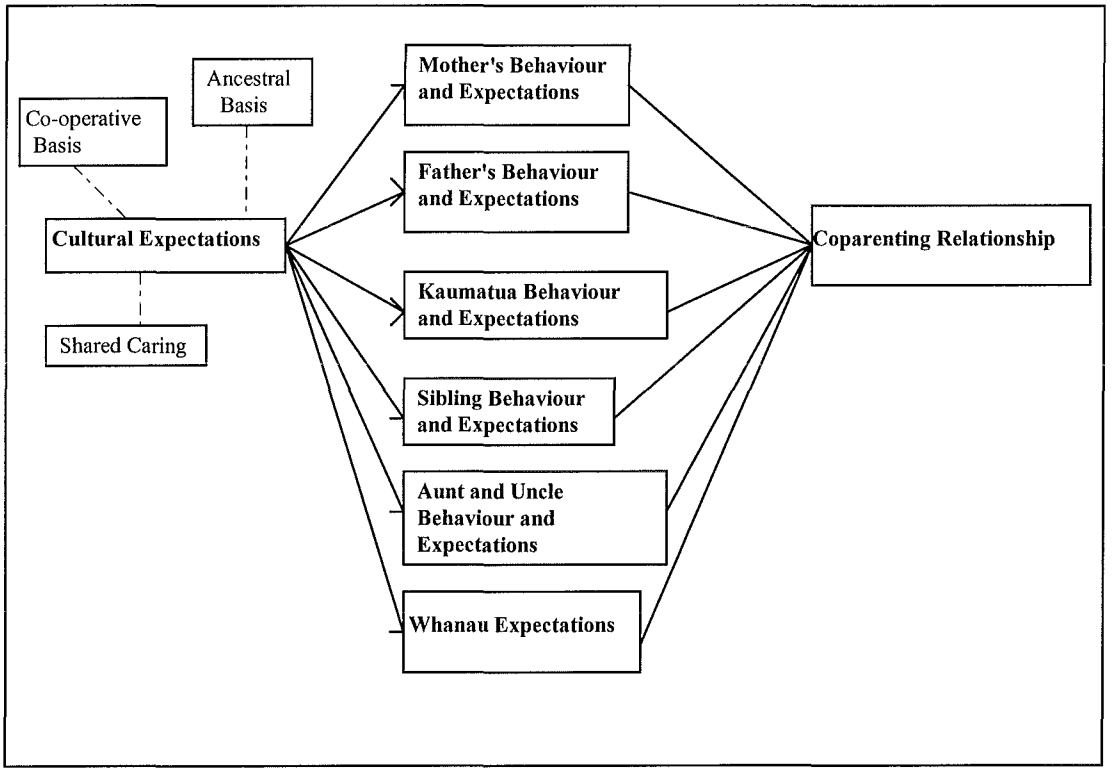

Figure 6.3. Conceptualisation of Traditional Māori Coparenting.

Māori coparenting as it occurs in Figure 6.3 requires a re-conceptualisation of coparenting, as there are so many more contributors to the relationship. The mother and father are involved with feeding and clothing; grandparents with tikanga, linguistics, reasoning, and self-esteem; siblings with caring and supervising the younger children; and aunts and uncles in disciplining and guiding the children. Finally there is provision made for the general whānau, this accounts for the expectations of and for the total whānau unit. This coparenting relationship of six parts recognises the Traditional Māori norm of working as a collective. As each partner tackles a separate, yet related, area of development, a holistic approach emerges.

Conceptualisation of Urban Māori Coparenting.

Lastly, Urban Māori require a different understanding of coparenting again. The features that particularly distinguish this model Figure 6.4, from Figure 6.3, is that the coparenting alliance returns to the Pākehā norm of the mother and father. However, as this behaviour is carried out as if the traditional context remained, it is noted that the coparenting relationship is inadequate as other components of the relationship are missing. These cause points of stress within the family, and coparenting relationship and may lead on to affect child development and adjustment.

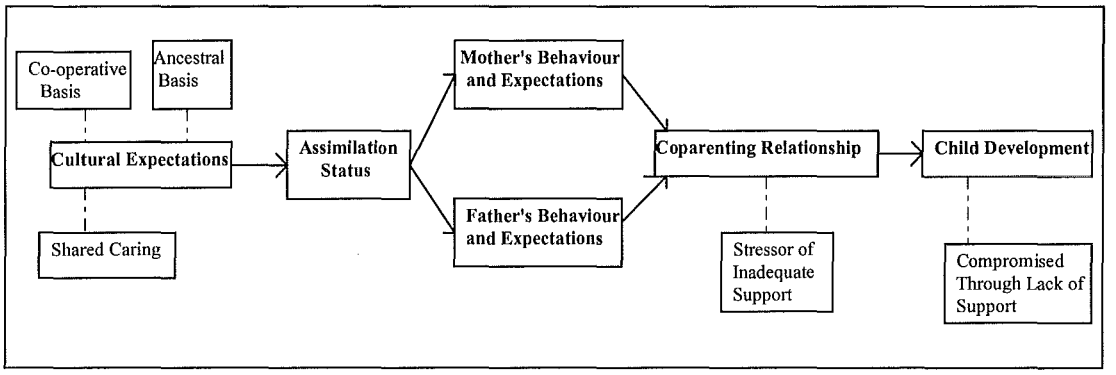

Figure 6.4. Conceptualisation of Urban Māori Coparenting.

Another variable in Figure 6.4 is the inclusion of 'assimilation status', this is intended to account for the various degrees of assimilation experienced by Urban Māori. For some, it may be considerable, and for others, only slight. Whatever the experience is, the amount of assimilation will be reflected in the coparenting behaviours employed, the more traditional, the less assimilation.

Conclusion.

This chapter has developed models for conceptualising the role of coparenting in different family settings. These settings, as a function of culture, are influenced by various factors, and may be congruent with other practices, or may be based upon very different expectations and values. It is important to recognise that a general model has been developed, as well as a more specific conceptualisation for Māori and Pākehā. It is through this that the different influences, and structures become evident, therefore illustrating the existence of cultural variations which impact on current understandings of coparenting.

It is intended that the implications of these models will be further discussed and concluded upon. The essential component to take from this chapter is to recognise the differences in particular, of the Māori models, in order to appreciate that coparenting trends may not easily map across from North America to New Zealand.

Chapter Seven

Discussion and Conclusion

This thesis has journeyed from the research findings of coparenting in North America, to developing models for understanding parenting, and therefore coparenting, in New Zealand. While it has not been one overladen with research findings on the New Zealand populations of interest, it is this situation that grants significance to this work. New Zealand has had little coparenting research undertaken here. Perhaps this is related to the ideals of masculinity, making New Zealand men very hard to sample, or perhaps it is that this is remains to be a relatively new notion, and has not had time to be acknowledged here as yet. As it stands, this work supports the need for further investigation into New Zealand parenting, not only for ethnographical purposes, but such research would have implications for understanding parenting influences and developmental outcomes. Such an understanding would promote conceptualisations and interventions for promoting well-being in families. Furthermore, this could be carried out in contexts, and using processes, that were in harmony with the culture presented, whereby encouraging more successful intervention results and implications.

However, it is necessary to acknowledge that Māori parenting structures differ greatly from Pākehā and North American standards. As presented in Chapter 1, this thesis acknowledges McHale, Rao and Krasnow (2000) who asked "How useful is the notion of co-parenting in cultures where ideologies, family beliefs, and parenting practices diverge from those of the United States?" (p.112). All efforts have been made to address this question throughout the chapters provided and have supported a common conclusion that culture is an important influence on parenting, and that coparenting as a function of culture, will differ between North American and New Zealand populations, to some degree at least.

In response to the overall aim of this thesis to investigate whether the North American literature on coparenting could be applied to the New Zealand experience of parenting, when

culture has been taken into account, this chapter shall draw conclusions around the overall relevance of the North American findings, on the models developed for Māori, and for Pākehā. It has been repeatedly shown that culture impacts on coparenting, and that New Zealand requires further research in this area to develop more adequate explanations. However, for purpose of concluding this work, it has been shown that Māori and Pākehā parents have their own values and behaviour expectations that impact on parenting and coparenting, and in the case of Māori, require that the conceptualisation of coparenting as created in North America, be redeveloped to encompass other family-group dynamics.

North American Coparenting Conceptualisations.

As has been outlined in previous chapters, North American coparenting research has been primarily concerned with Caucasian samples, who have valued independence and personal success in terms of development. The research findings suggested that culture needed to be acknowledged in coparenting research, and it was indeed worthy of investigation.

Māori Coparenting.

The Urban Māori conceptualisation is very different from the understandings of North American and Pākehā coparenting. Not only do their cultural values differ, but also the structure of the coparenting itself is distinctly different.

The behaviour pattern discussed by McCarthy (1997), which has seen the emergence of the 'fractured whānau unit', has many varied and interesting interpretations. This

parenting approach has been considered by Pākehā in particular to be neglectful (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1970) and perhaps could be considered as Permissive and Authoritarian, should parenting styles be afforded applicability here. Such behaviour patterns may go some way to understanding where families are failing to provide adequate child rearing environments. Such an implication can only have healthy and community-benefiting results.

Similarly, Māori have been identified as featuring in low SES and criminal statistics too prominently. It was noted earlier that stressors such as economic hardship may contribute to negative parenting relationships, and therefore support negative coparenting tendencies and less optimal child development results. It is tentatively suggested that perhaps the misperception of the traditional coparenting structure by the parent involved, may encourage the inadequate parenting regime to continue. Thus, it can be seen that Urban Māori coparenting, as it is defined here, occurs in family-group dynamics that are foreign to Western standards. The European focus of parenting by the biological parents, and of the encouragement of self-expression and individualism closes the door on any question of differences.

Perhaps the most interesting component of all in this investigation is the understanding that Māori coparenting is comprised of a different structuring of coparenting altogether. It is concluded that Māori coparenting differs from North American understandings of the coparenting relationship. However, it is acknowledged that the coparenting structure as it occurs here, is just as significant in terms of development.

As illustrated by the conceptualisation of the 'fractured whānau unit', when traditional coparenting structures are broken down, yet not adequately compensated for, less optimal developmental patterns may occur. As a result of conceptualising Māori parenting,

this understanding came to light as a possible predictor for child development and adjustment problems. Clearly, this requires further consideration and testing, however, it is through the investigation currently on hand that this hypothesis was formed.

The note that Māori may be considered Permissive, as well as authoritarian may appear to be contradictory, however it is plausible. Given the conceptualisations developed here that traditional Māori parents take a more Authoritarian approach, while urban Māori without support may show Permissive tendencies as well. Notably, it is not so much the label that is significant as this is also influenced by culture, nor is it necessary that all aspects fully describe the parent, as this too is a function of culture.

It could also be considered that different partners of the traditional Māori coparenting team may prescribe to different parenting styles. For example, the disciplinary team of the parents may utilise authoritarian principles. The grandparents who act as teachers, encouraging reasoning and linguistic ability (Metge, 1995), may be more authoritative in their approach. Finally, the siblings who become responsible for the younger children may tend to be more authoritarian in their approach. Certainly, these parenting style implications are worthy of further investigation.

In further support of the significance of Māori coparenting, it was noted earlier that hostility in family relationships is associated with child aggression, and therefore that cultures which value harmony and cohesiveness should be less likely to experience such problems. Māori cultural values indicate that group harmony and cohesiveness is to be valued over individual gain. Therefore, it is considered here that coparenting is likely to occur in harmonistic manners, however only if further indices are met as well. Good psychological resources have also been noted as insuring family relationships against dissent, therefore,

Māori parents who perceive adequate resources, such as the valued familial coparenting interactions, are more likely to experience harmony.

Pākehā Coparenting.

Pākehā coparenting, it would appear, has more westernalised notions, than Māori, and therefore aligning the practices and values more so with North American findings. Granted that there is little research on Pākehā parenting, this conceptualising of coparenting proved difficult. However, from developing an understanding of Pākehā and North American Westernised values, it is concluded that their coparenting behaviours and attitudes are at least, more similar in practice and approach than North American and Māori parents. The individualistic, self - expressive nature of these societies support this conclusion. However it is also suggested here that the notions of egalitarianism, frontier mentality, masculinity, conformity and autonomy interact with the coparenting evident.

It is difficult to conclude just how the aspect of the New Zealand psyche that were outlined, interact with coparenting, and to what degree they influence attitudes and behaviours. Perhaps, coparenting, is a conservative approach of both parents, however primarily the concern of the mothers. These traditional aspects of parenting correspond with Ritchie & Ritchie's (1970) notes that New Zealanders are stable, and conservative people.

Pākehā do tend to value cohesiveness in terms of team membership and success, as illustrated by the Tall Poppy Syndrome, suggesting that coparenting to this degree may be more positive than elsewhere. In conclusion, though, there is little evidence available to suggest that Pākehā coparenting would not align with North American research findings. At

the very least, the implications of the North American data would be of interest for the Pākehā parenting population.

Conclusion.

This thesis has undertaken the study of coparenting with the aim to investigate whether the North American literature on coparenting can be applied to the New Zealand experience of parenting with reasonable confidence of generalisation, when culture is taken into account. It is concluded that Pākehā parenting would be benefited by understanding the North American research findings. However, Māori coparenting takes a very different form. For those Māori who continue to uphold traditional parenting structures, the coparenting team may consist of several units of people. Each of these may apply different parenting styles in accordance with the coparenting domain with which they are concerned. The Urban Māori, as they are defined in this research, may tend to parent in traditional ways, but without the remainder of the coparenting team, therefore leaving many areas neglected. This unconscious relay of the perception of parenting as a child, does not recognise the often unseen efforts of the whole whānau in raising the child with multiple influences.

This thesis presented new conceptualisations of parenting and family studies as they relate to the New Zealand context. This work acknowledges the role of culture and thus, has developed implications for interventions that are built upon understandings developed here. The notion of developing culture-specific awareness encourages aiding families to create positive family environments in manners that are appropriate for their values surrounding coparenting. Furthermore, understanding New Zealand coparenting provides an insight to New Zealand culture and lifestyle like none before. More research on this topic aids the understanding of New Zealand parenting.

Finally, future research should consider empirically based work. Pākehā parenting conceptualisations are particularly in need, however Māori coparenting practices are also worthy of more attention. The need for Pākehā research mainly centres on the lack of modern-day research to adequately draw broad conclusions on. Future research should consider more specifically the elements of coparenting in New Zealand, whether Pākehā mothers are more likely to support the fathers of their children on the basis of masculinity, or if they are becoming more autonomous. Should this be the case, it would be worth investigating whether this was creating antagonism in the coparenting relationship. Māori parents on the other hand, deserve further attention to find out how prevalent traditional methods are, in both the urban and rural settings. The Māori coparenting relationship may adapt in time to urban settings as generations to come acknowledge their changing environment. Finally, those in mixed marriages, or who have cross generational and cultural coparenting relationships deserve more attention in New Zealand. To understand how New Zealand parents work together or against each other in their own context will develop understandings of child-rearing in New Zealand, as well as aid interventions designed to support New Zealand parents to maximise their parenting abilities, and thus, child-rearing environment.

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